MATA AMRITANANDAMAYI :

THE DEATH OF HER OWN BROTHER

AND OTHER

MYSTERIOUS

STORIES

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MATA AMRITANANDAMAYI: THE DEATH OF HER OWN BROTHER AND OTHER MYSTERIOUS STORIES

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Background of Babas and Ammas

God-men and women are special phenomena of Indian spiritual industry. They influence everything here, including the governments. They run very many industries that produce and sell bogus products thereby successfully fooling tens of thousands of people. And few people dare question this situation, thanks to the support these living gods have from the ruling class. They claim they possess divine power. They say they hear divine voices. They claim they can heal illness with miracle-powers. In fact they are people afflicted with some mental imbalances, though we cannot say they suffer mental disorders to the extent of illness. Yet some of them, beyond any doubt, are truly mentally ill.

They could be broadly classified into two categories. The first is of people with real mental illness. They have lost the connection with ground realities, and live in a world of fancies that is, wilfully

or otherwise, labelled as divinity. Sometimes they can even hurt themselves, since they may have no concern for their own physical bodies. They may hear and experience fanciful visions and sounds which could be taken for hallucinations. This is something connected with certain chemicals triggering in their brain, and with a minimal knowledge of Science we can affirm this. Depending on the level of their illness, it can be explained as a divine experience or ghostly visions. When they swoon or faint during these sessions of apparent sickness, these phenomenon are often interpreted by their devotees and followers as evidence of the presence of divine voices.

Depending on the degree of their mental imbalance, their trances or agitation could be explained as divine experience just like the experiencing of ghostly visions. What they jabber incoherently during these moments of ranting or jabbering will be taken or interpreted as manifestations of a divine presence by their devotees and followers.

Quite contradictorily, the god-person won't have any idea of what he or she is doing. They are generally not fully aware of their mental problems. Sometimes they can even lose their sense of pain when they get hurt.

The second class of god -men and -women rightly belong to the world of crimes and psychopathology. They fabricate stories about their divinity and power to perform innumerable miracles on deliberate purpose, unlike the ones in the other class of man-gods . As we have just mentioned the first class of people are doing what they do on account of their mental illness, unknowingly

and without certain objectives, at least in the beginning of their god-man career.

The core team they manage to keep up is also of people with criminal backgrounds and inclinations. They will reap the benefit of the association. Simply put, it is a kind of mafia that deals the spirituality business worth millions of rupees.
So, this is an organized undertaking where they put at the centre a baba or an amma and under this cover up of spiritual activities they operate all of their illegal trades. They will find good friends in the government and ruling class to make their trade even more safe and profitable as well, riding on the advantages of green channels in air- and sea- ports and getting easy approvals for private universities and colleges and hospitals to build up and operate lucrative business in the field of healthcare and education.

They employ all the modern technologies available and media to substantiate and profess this falsehood.
All these attempts culminate in making the mentally ill person into a godman with large number of followers, popularly known in India as bhakts—devotees. If you study the life and style of living of these babas and ammas you will be convinced that they are no more than pathological cases. We have such stories in every part of our country and their number is getting larger by the year. This is the reason why we need to carry out more such studies in this direction to expose them and show the rest of the world what they really are.

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CHAPTER 1

Ignorant People and Enthusiastic Babas

India has a very long history of being a country of saints, monks and sad-gurus. They have enriched India's multiple disciplines of knowledge. Philosophy, science, literature and art have grown and flourished thanks to them. This fact is appreciated by modern historians too. Those saints gifted our country with this insightful treasure of thoughts in the forms of the *Upanishads, memamsas and puranas.* Either with or prior to the spiritualism and proposed material line of thinking such as kanadavada, their profound and divergent thoughts are really a wonderful source of inspiration down to this day.

So eventually, people began to respect all those who wrapped themselves in a piece of saffron cloth, claiming to be gurus and babas. People around them saw them as the perfect culmination of the lineage of our visionary munis and saints.

During the course of time this category of people created sects and rose to the status of being a baba or guru to exploit the soci-

ety in order to live a luxurious life with immense power, influence and money. They could use the great wealth they accumulated to establish themselves even more firmly. The vicious cycle continues on and on.

They are gods, living ones in flesh and blood. Some of them raped women or even young girls including minors, and some kidnapped and killed their opponents.
No one can challenge or question them, leave alone the question of trying to put them behind bars. Dharmendra Brahmachari had top level influence in the government. He could get access to key members of the ruling class when Indira Gandhi was in power. When Narasimha Rao was prime minister, Chandra Swami and his henchmen had more control over the then government than its own home minister. It took the steel-like bravery of the low-key co-minister, Rajesh Pilot, to chain the hands of Chandra Swami. Had there been no Rajesh Pilot the swami would have had continued with all his shady practices.

Baba Ramdev and his associate Acharya Balkrishna have criminal backgrounds in cheating people and in the illegal possession of weapons.

Two babas are serving jail terms for murder and raping minors. What about those who managed to go unnoticed with their crime? You know only the tip the iceberg is visible and the huge mass is hidden from sight. The same is true with the questionable practices our babas.

More and more shocking incidents surface occasionally. When the authority itself turns into obedient servants and devotees of

these godmen, they no longer have anything to fear and they see themselves above the law.
Once Mata Amritanandamayi's father reportedly told one of his disobedient victims that if he killed her, nobody would care, since his daughter, amma, had influence over people as high as the prime minister of the country.

Why do the people look towards these human gods more than they worship gods like Vishnu, Maheshwar and Brahma, who are the real gods in Hinduism? The answer is crystal-clear. They are just a myth. The Hindu gods cannot give money and build hospitals. These human— living—gods can do it in the real world.
As they collect millions in donations from rich devotees, a small part of that goes to charity work to fool the public eye. And this charity too helps the organizers get back in multiples what they spent. So it is even more profitable.

They start hospitals and schools which can be turned into sources of profit, whereas old age homes, orphanages and free medical centers represent a liability and drainage of money, and interestingly they have none of them.

If you want an accounting of how the money is spent, even the governments have no idea. No accounting. No auditing. They are legally bound to submit any balance book to any authority, though. So, everything is in the dark for the public as well as the governments. Interestingly they are allowed to have green channels to pump money into safer hands. Some swamjis launder black money to white with a hefty charge for it. They have clients so big and small, because money laundering is one of the safest ways to turn black money into white or grey.

All the charity institutes they run, hospitals and schools are milk cows. They charge more in service fees. The flip side is that they pay very little to their employees. There are incidents of employees striking for wage hikes at these hospitals and schools run by 'charity' ammas and babas. In some ayurvedic factories run by babas they pay much less. When asked about a salary hike they were told it was a charity and the salary could not go any higher. But the same baba spends millions in advertisements every year. Sanyasis –monks– are supposed to renounce the world and live a very simple life. Godmen, on the contrary are leading a luxurious life. Mata Amritanandamayi has accumulated wealth doing the business of faith, which takes hardly any investment. This can be compared to activities by Catholic churches that run orphanages and old age homes to show to the faithful, who in turn contribute big money. These contributions are a thousand times bigger than what they spend on the so-called charity. Human gods are no different; they certainly do charity to get black money many times greater than what they actually spend.

In some of the chapters of this book, we will try to investigate the wrongdoing and the unusual deaths that happened in the ashram and other organizations belonging to Mata Amritanandamayi. In some, we will discuss how she became what she became.

CHAPTER 2

Sudhamani - the Girl Who Became Mata

Mata Amritanandamayi was one of the four daughters of Sugunanandan who fished at the Parayakadavu beach in Alappad village to make a living. Her real name was Sudhamani. When she was about 17 years old, she happened to attend a bhajan that was going on at the home of a neighbourhood family. Bhajan is a form of worship in Hinduism during which devotees sing songs in praise of gods, all this accompanied by melodious music. The songs are often so sweet that they can fire the imaginations of the faithful gathered there instantly. Sudhamani was a master of bhajans. Gail Tredwell was attracted to Sudhamani even before she came to know about amma in person, thanks to the audio cassette she played on which amma was shown singing bhajans.

So she listened to the bhajan, as the bhajan went along to hit its peak of enthusiasm, Sudhamani began to dance to the rhythm of the songs, with such intensity that it could be taken for a fit of hysteria. Her frantic gestures surprised the people around her. Everyone believed that she had been possessed by some divine

power. She had taken dance classes while she attended school. Now these dance classes obviously came useful.

Her favourite role was Lord Krishna, who was supposed to be just as dark skinned as she was. Her second favourite role was of Bhadrakali, or Kali taking on the demon Dharika to murder him. As she became proficient in dancing, she wore the dance dresses and ornaments for it and danced on special occasions.

The faithful crowd of the vicinity came in to see this. Slowly the crowd began to grow bigger and bigger. Sudhamani's father, Sugunanandan helped his daughter to perform and stage these show-offs.

Sometime in this period, a youth named Chathu attended Sudhamani's performances. At that time Chathu was studying at Sandeepani Vidyalaya. Chathu later become an acquaintance of Neil Rosner, an American when they both happed to be in Thiruvannamalai. Neil Rosner was wandering the world in search of the keys to a spiritual life.

Chathu told him that someone appeared in Parayakadavu who was the avatar he was in search of.

On his advice Neil Rosner and other two Europeans, accompanying him started off to Parayakadavu. Neil Rosner found the visit fruitful and abandoned any idea of going back home. Neil Rosner stayed with Sudhamani thereafter. He gave up his original name and took on the name – Neel Kandan, a different name of Lord Shiva. Neel Kanda in Sanskrit means the person with blue neck. The Purana story says that Shiva gulped down the poison given

off by the sea, while churning the celestial sea in order to extract amrit, a divine cream that makes everyone who consumes it deathless and ever youthful. Before amrit a celestial poison came out, kalakooda, which could damage the entire world if it spilled down. So in order to save the world, lord Shiva tried to consume the poison, so that it never fell anywhere in the world. Nevertheless, seeing her husband about to take the poison, Shiva's wife squeezed the neck of her husband tightly to prevent the poison from going down. The poison got stuck in his neck and the neck turned blue. That is how lord Shiva got another name Neel Kanda, the blue necked.

There was also a European, Gail Tredwell, who had also been Sudhamani's disciple, going around with a new name, Gayatri. Neil Rosner attended a tutorial class nearby to learn Malayalam, the native language of Kerala.

Rosener was the person who built an air-conditioned two storey building there, a first ever in that under-developed place. After the joining of Neil Rosener to her fold, she also changed her name and took a new one, *Mata Amritanandamayi*.

Now more and more people drifted to Parayakadavu and Mata Amritanandamayi, thanks to the European disciples, apparently. She also made most of it by having her bhajan on the daily list of rituals every day of the year.

She also let the devotees meet her in person, a private darshan. This also helped her get so popular. Some of the people who visited her stayed around as permanent inmates. One of them was a person from Konkani community. Later the family of the

youngster filed a complaint with the police to get back their boy from her ashram.

Eventually, the Mata Amritanandamayi Trust was formed, with C Narayanan Pillai as president and Dr Karthik Das, secretary.

CHAPTER 3

Stories of a Miraculous Childhood

The mata's official biographers have penned down stories about her divine birth and childhood. The stories they tell are meant to show how she was made a god in flesh and blood, an avatar of God. Let us delve into some of these narratives: A child was born on 27 September 1953 under Karthika star cluster, (Pleiades in western astronomy). She was given the name Sudhamani by her parents. Sudhamani was not the first child of Damayanti and Sugunanandan. She was the forth. After giving birth to two children Damayanti delivered a baby boy as her third offspring. He was a very unusual child. The boy's body was of bright blue colour. Every one celebrated the birth of the blue coloured baby, taking him for the avatar of lord Krishna, who was believed to be blue in colour. Sadly enough after 53 days the child died. Therefore, nobody saw it as an occasion of joy when a dark skinned baby girl was born after the baby boy – her biographer writes.

When Damayanti was carrying her, she used to dream of Lord Shiva and Lord Krishna. On another occasion, she also dreamt that somebody gifted her a golden figurine of Lord Krishna. We can trace amma's Krishna apparition here. The biographer again

writes – this is the clear indication that she is divine.

It is usual with newborns that they start crying just after birth. However, she never cried, or so they say. The child was of blue colour, the colour of goddess Kali and lord Krishna.

On another occasion the biographer wrote; all newborn babies cry at the time of birth, yet this child did not cry. The child was blue coloured, just like Krishna and Kali. This miracle child, named Sudhamani started to speak at an early age of six months. She spoke in crystal-clear Malayalam. At the age of seven months she would rather run than walk, or so the story goes. These are some of the so called miracles associated with her infant days. Her official biographers have tried to fill the pages with this genre of divine stories in order to make an impression of her divine nature.

It is deemed necessary to establish in one way or another that she was of divine descent, so as to satisfy and entice many of her devotees and followers. Therefore, her official biographers even lend her parents a touch of divinity. Her parents were elevated to possess the divine qualities needed to make them seem worthy of being the rightful mother and father of this divine child. These stories circulate among the followers as we see below.

The traditional occupation of Edamannel families had been fishing. Now they do many other things like other people on the shore.

Nevertheless, this particular family attended religious ceremonies at temples and poojas, read Bhagavata at houses, observed

many a ritual and kept religious fasting. This linage produced many devout sages.

Her grandfather, Velayudhan was a great devotee. He passed away at the age of fifty. In memory of this great soul, at the south of Edamannel house, they have made a small step made from earth. Not long after Velayudhan died, a sage came and he advised the family to light up a lamp daily at this place meant for the great yogi.

Nobody will ever forget the sight of Madhavi, Velayudhan's wife, who strung flowers to make garlands squatting there with a lowered head.

It was Sugunandan, who was destined to become the father of Sudhamani. It was a divine will that destined him for this role. While he was attending lower primary school, a saint came to Edamannel. It is striking enough that major incidents at Edamannel started with the coming a particular saint. This saint pointed out his finger at the house and said that it was a great pious place. He also said that this place would become a destination where great yogis and sanyasis would come to do sadhanas and attain Samadhi, divine demise. Each grain of sand of the place was holy, he added.

From his very early years Sugunanandan was very devout. He had a great love for Lord Krishna. As he was so fascinated with Kathakali, he learned it at the age of ten. Thanks to being a Krishna devotee he played Krishna on performing Kathakali. Once while was performing the role of Krishna, he was possessed by lord Krishna and took a Krishna-bhava.

Sugunanandan was married to Damayanti. Damayanti was fortunate to be the mother of Mata Amritanandamayi. Damayanti's father Punyan too was from a traditionally devout family of saints. They have their own family temple. This is quite common in India, but the biographer played it up with over enthusiasm. Damayanti never failed to keep up with all religious practises and fasting, never faltering. There is one example meant to show the greatness of her pious way of conducting herself: She always broke her fasting with the water of a tender coconut. If there was no one around to pull down a tender coconut from the tree, the tree itself would let one tender coconut fall down. This incident occurred not just once, or twice, it happened countless times.

Mata's biographers never felt a sense of realism when flaunting their dependency on *Amma*, as she was usually called, which is the Malayalam word for mother, as in all south Indian languages. The biographer we speak of had a mission to turn amma into a divine being by creating myths about her young life and also by assuring that she had been born from an impeccable lineage of devout and even divine persons.

Prof Ramakrishnan Nair was the first official biographer of Mata Amritanandamayi, now his book has been recalled by the mutt and not available in the market any longer. Ironically relations between Nair and Amma and her mutt deteriorated and he left the organization later on.

DIVINITY OF THE ASHRAM

The glory-selling biographers also glorified the very ground on which the ashram was built as well as the ashram itself. So they

wrote about the divinity of the ashram page after page. They had no respect for history nor interest in producing authentic evidence as they might have done with other cases.

Amma, the mother, one biographer wrote, said that the place in and around the ashram had been a holy place that housed numberless temples and ashrams in the bygone eras. A large number of yogis and siddhas walked here and eventually attained the eternal demise, *Samadhi*.

Today's ashram rests on a very good ancient temple, the biographer reported, as this is what Amma told them.

BRAHMINIFICATION OF AMMA

It is very interesting that all of her biographers are keenly inclined to establish her brahmanical lineage. That is another episode of the script written for the purpose of elevating amma and her family to new heights.

'When they became fabulously rich and well known, she probably longed to be a Brahmin woman or so it seems according to the paid biographer.

They started the brahminification with her parents. The job is relatively simple : to make one Brahmin, make his or her parents Brahmins first. We can do a verification of such claims.
One day a great hatayogi came to Edamannel and said to Sugunanandan , "You are Brahmins, nobody sees your holy thread across your chest, but I do."
The wise sage had the wisdom of age and rare insight. Mother

Damayanti was called *pattathiyamma* – Malayalam for a Brahmin woman – because of her strict and committed practice of religious faith and the fasting she undertook so often.

If you go through the biographical descriptions about her, either by a paid staff biographer or a committed devotee, you will come across several pages that glorify her divine and brahminic lineage.

CHAPTER 4

Against Scientific Association

It is being propagated far and wide that Amma has only love and affection for all the living things. But this is a simple lie and her hatred for progressive thinking people betrays this claim. When the Supreme Court of India opened up Sabarimala for the womenfolk in 2019 where women had been banned from entering it by a previous district court verdict, she took sides with the orthodoxy and staged demonstrations and programmes against the State Government of Kerala that was legally bound to implement the highest court's order this regard. She maintained that traditional views and belief about a woman's cleanliness during her menstrual days should be considered. The TV channel run by her, Amrita TV took a strong stand against females entering Sabarimala temple. She had the history of verbally attacking one of the progressive thinking organisation in Kerala, *Kerala Sasthra Sahithya Parishath* (KSSP)—Science and Literature Society of Kerala.
Relevant passages from her biography are translated below:

Some people came. They had brought some school text books on Science. They were Sasthra Sahithya Parishath people. The *brahmacharis* inspected the books. One man came forward and said,

"If you read this, you can get rid of your delusions."

As he spoke, strong smell of alcohol filled the air. The Brahmacharis stepped back to save themselves from the stinking smell. One of the brahmacharis asked calmly, "Has any one of you read all these?"

The science people said nothing. Brahmachari asked again, "How many of you have passed his 10th grade?"

Don't you think it's superstition to believe that superstitions will go away with reading these books without understanding? I'm telling you this just because you came here to remove our superstitions. We brahmacharis are well educated. We have science graduates, post-graduates, engineers, doctors and the likes. We have studied science. We came here to know if there is a god. This ashram is our laboratory.

The older among the Parishath came to see amma.

Amma : Sons, you go abroad to sell science. What is the point in just buying rice, don't we have to cook it?
"Don't we have the experience? After reading the books, bringing them to practice, sell them by demonstrating what is in them. You are drunk already. You never learned how to put them into practise. You should think on your own and arrive at a principle. We are doing that here. Whatever is in books, we will benefit only from what we experience".

They nodded, not knowing what to say. Each of them joined their palms in respect and retreated.

After they had all left the scene, amma told us. Don't you realize that one of those men had been acting against the ashram with a superstition eradication committee or something like that? He came here, not to sell books. They came here rather to ridicule you brahmacharis here. But they became convinced that their plot won't work here. It is good that they came. Now their mind has become wavering and unsettled. Even if they won't agree now, they will change their mind.

Amma will occasionally show the inner minds of others. The Sasthra Sahithya Parishath people left. The most drunken among them was shouting something against superstition, throwing his hands in all directions. When they left the ashram, it became silent again.

It is very much evident here that she is ridiculing the respected organization of Kerala, the Kerala Sasthra Sahithya Parishath. She has a special inclination to show progressive elements in a bad light. She seems to imply here that all Sasthra Sahithya Parishath workers are alcoholic and that they cannot not even pass their 10th grade at school. It is also clear that she describes them as persons with no ability to read and understand science books, despite the fact that they happened to have some.
Let us hear now what Ramajunan, one of the earliest and hardcore activists of the Parishath, has to say:

I happened to read a part of the book Speeches of Mata Amritanandamayi (1953 to 1985, Volume 2) under the title Sasthra Sahithya Parishath People. This note is a reaction to that passage.
"I have been involved with Sasthra Sahithya Parishath for more than three decades. Anyone who has no idea about Sasthra Sa-

hithya Parishath and its activities will certainly get a wrong picture of Shasthra Sahithya Parishath after reading this book. It has been depicted so badly there."

I have conducted an inquiry to ascertain that the above incident described in her biography actually took place. I have contacted the former Parishath workers and asked about it. Nobody knew of the incident as detailed in her autobiography. They knew of no person among them who went to the ashram to sell books. It is very evident that she cooked up this story just to tarnish the image of Parishath and its activities. She might have bad feelings against people who hold modern views and are opposed those like her. They often times make statements against her in media. This could be a reason for her to portray them as alcoholics and people who have problems with reading and therefore with comprehension in order to grasp the facts.

At that time Parishath was more than 4,000 members strong. They no doubt had people who could not have passed 10th grade exams. Sasthra Sahithya Parishath was, and is, not meant for the educated alone. It was rather an organisation for all people from all walks of life.

Parishath had members who had not passed their 10th class along with well-educated people including the nation's most acclaimed scientists, engineers and technocrats. The objective of the Parishath is to give education to common people in Science, covering all its varied branches. Parishath works with schools and colleges in countless ways to raise awareness in our younger generation in science and familiarize them with the spirit of scientific methods. So they have spent a considerable amount of

time teaching basic lessons of science. Parishath has published several books to this end. It has conducted and carried out programs like Sashthra Jatha –Science March– to bring about public awareness regarding environmental hazards and other socially relevant issues.

So, the Parishath have a special place in Kerala's educational and cultural domains.

The Parishath had taken up many issues involving the lives of the people. Thanks to their activism, the government was compelled to dump its projects in Silent Valley, a virgin forest in Kerala, and thus the forest was saved from being exploited, and kilometres of forest stretches of precious and fragile environment were preserved.

Parishath has won more than one international award for its committed stand and sincere actions. Its extensive work in spreading the spirit of scientific awareness is well appreciated all over the world.

Mata Amritanandamayi's remarks about Parishath are merely attempts to discredit the responsible organisation, mentioning not a word about the great works it had done in the past.

It is obvious that people like her want to target organisations like Parishath that aim at liberating people from blind faith. It is more than evident that organisations like Parishath are a threat to people like Mata and their organizations.

CHAPTER 5

Abusing of Atheists

There is a fabricated story about A. T. Kovoor, a celebrated atheist in the past :"Kovoor had said that eyes should be donated to medical college. He never said the body, he just said his eyes and his body. So it is clear that Kovoor was not just a body, and there is something beyond it. He did not say his corpse or dead body. She told someone something that found its place in one of her books, Speeches of Mata Amritanandamayi. This shows her difficulty in understanding about organ transplanting. The eyes are not dead, just because their owner is. In most cases, it is the cornea that is donated to someone with no eyes or poor eyesight. It is notable to say here that Kovoor's eyes were donated to two different persons after his death. The persons who received them lived with the donated eye for the rest of their lives.

Joseph Edamaruku, a well-known author in his country wrote a book called "Jesus and Krishna Never Lived" written in Malayalam. "He claims that Christ was not born, Krishna was not born." "On another occasion he says that Christ is a revolutionary. How can one that is not born be a revolutionary? They worship photos of people who say value-less things like these." So laments another passage from her book. It is apparent that she didn't

touch the book written by the very distinguished author, Joseph Edamaruku.

Likewise, she has probably never read this book as well. The title of the books is 'Christ the Man'.
Edamaruku wrote another book in 1953. In that book he established that the god Christians worshipped might be just a man not god. But as he went on researching more, he arrived at the conclusion that Christ was a total myth.

Perhaps she simply heard someone criticising Edamaruku and she might have arrived at her own logical idea of Edamaruku's works. It again proves that she didn't have the habit of reading books and developed ideas based on hearsay.
This is one reason she would not even cite the real name of the books she criticised. She accuses rationalists and atheists of worshipping photographs of people who championed the idea of free thinking and atheism.
The fact lies in just the opposite direction: atheists never worship anybody's photographs. This sentence spoken by her is another proof that she has no respect for facts that are so obvious.

Which came first, mango or mango tree?

You children should ask atheists which came first, the mango or the mango tree. If we need a mango tree, we need a mango first. Before mangoes, didn't we have to have the mango trees? This is a question from her book Speeches of Mata Amritanandamayi.
You might have faced the question time and again. This is not an original question she discoved all by herself. A few decades ago Science couldn't answer this question. So the religious threw this

question to silence their critics. Now we can say with clarity that it is the seed that came first. Same way we can answer the question of hen or egg first. The hen is the right answer according to Science. In the evolution of creatures egg laying organisms came into scene much later. Ancestors of hens didn't lay eggs. They gave birth to their young ones. So the question has only one possible answer, the seed.

Thanks to the phenomenon called mutation, creatures evolve into another creature. Mutation of the offspring genes causes eventually the formation of a new species. Now let us go back to her first question. It is pointless to bring rice only. You have to cook it to make it edible. Some people keep Science books, but never read them to understand them. This is quite in fitting with her character. She keeps a mountain of books in her ashram, which she never bothers to read, perhaps even a single one of them.

Her shallow and hollow sentences are a proof of this.

CHAPTER 6

Miracle Claims

Water turned into milk and panchamritha by her miracle power. A reader can find many stories that deal with the miraculous power of Mata Amritanandamayi in those books published by Amritanandamayi Mission. All these stories are crafted with intentions and objectives of their own. Let us examine some of them here. All the people who gathered were not believers. Some questioned her divine powers. If we want to trust in God, some miracle should be accomplished. If she could demonstrate some kind of divine power, we could then believe in her divinity. Sudhamani who was assuming Krishna, Krishna bhava, asked them to come on next keta day (an astronomical mentioning of days of a month), the reciting day. On the next reciting day, a day for reciting of the purana, a lot of people came. Some of them climbed to the terrace of nearby buildings and stayed up there, in order to see clearly if some trick were being played, in the place of a true miracle.

That day Sudhamani took the role of Krishna, she asked for some clean water. A person coming out from the crowd gave her water in a bronze pot. She then poured some water from the pot and sprinkled it around with her hand, as teertha jalam, holy water. Then she asked a sceptic to come along and to touch the pot. And

she poured the water into his cupped palm it was not water but milk that he got. Another sceptic was called in and she asked him too to touch the pot. He did what was told and she poured the content of the pot into his hand, this time it was *panchamritha*, the five-ingredient holy compound. It was something sweet. She asked them to touch the pot just to make sure that it was their wish, not hers that was about to be realized.

She gave the panchamritha to all the people who gathered there from the little pot. But the pot had full of panchamritha. Then she walked west to the seashore and gave out the remaining panchamritha to those people who were sitting at the banyan tree. Even after this, the pot had panchamritha left in it.

Many people saw the miracle of having panchamritha pouring out of the pot. All of them believed in the divinity of Mata Amritanandamayi. For a few days the smell of panchamritha lingered in the hands of those who had it, so people were extremely convinced that it was not a trick by some magic but a real divine miracle.

Sometimes some people would call on her and request her to provide a solution to a life-wrecking situation. Sudhamani would ask them to light a camphor cube and put in on her tongue assuming the possession of lord Krishna, Krishnabhava. The object would burn in her mouth like a ball of fire. She would shut up her mouth pulling in her tongue. After the bhava had gone, there was no sight of burning inside her mouth. Then on, everybody believed that her *Krishna-bhava* was real, and she had the possession of the spirit of lord Krishna.

IT DIDN'T RAIN ON THE BANYAN TREE

On one of her bhava days a big crowd was formed around the banyan tree, where her bhava took place usually. All of the sudden it began to rain. People were left with no choice other than getting wet in the rain. There was no place with a roof around. Sooner than later, the rain turned heavy. But people were astonished by the fact that the place covered by the banyan tree was free from raining. Not a drop fell in and around the banyan tree where people gathered. But the rain was pouring on and on around the banyan tree.

RIDDING OF THE MENACE OF A SNAKE

At that time people were very much afraid of a snake that was sighted near the banyan tree. During night time people became even more scared of the snake.
So some approached the god and shared their fears and worries.
One day the same snake crept into the place where the bhava was going on. In the fit of bhava she caught the snake by her hand and she touched the snake, then touched the reptile with her own tongue and let it go away.
The snake never came back again.

FISHES FILLING THE SEA

At one the fishermen had been finding it hard to catch fish because there were far fewer fish in the sea. So they came to Mata Amritanandamayi during her Krishna-bhava and shared their concerns.
Then the god gave them some tulsi leaves and asked them to

throw the leaves in the sea. They came back again without doing what they were told to, for some reasons or the other. Sudhamani was on her bhava then too. She told them 'Are you teasing me? Why did you not throw the tulsi leaves into the sea?'
They were ashamed on hearing this. She walked away from her seat at the banyan tree to the seashore on her bhava, the by-standers also accompanied her. She danced there touching the waves of the shore.
The next day from the shore could be witnessed a sea of full of fish. The fishermen were relieved. She performed this miracle more than once, when she was requested to do the same or so they say.

The fishermen folk were thus blessed by Mata Amritanandamayi. However, she did not continue this because it was for achieving a personal objective.

THE LAMP THAT BURNED WITHOUT OIL

One day the only lamp that was kept at the kalari to light up for worshiping was crushed by Subhagan, her older brother. When the devotees came to kalari to attend her bhava next day they worried about the lamp that it was broken.
It was the responsibility of the gods to find a solution. So Sudhamani asked her devotees to collect shells from the shore. Some fetched some shells. She slid wicks into the shells. Sudhamani asked her devotees to pray god to light the lamps of the shell. People did that. To everyone's surprise, all the shell-lamps burned brightly. Moreover, it is said that these lamps kept shining until the bhava ended. Everybody believed that it was a miracle by

god. It helped people have yet more belief in her divine powers (Speeches, Pg 105).

A SNAKE LICKED ON THE FACE

Her family made her life so miserable to the point that she left her home. A woman in the neighbourhood consoled her. She took Sudhamani into her own house. She stayed there crying for a long time. She kept crying and eventually her mind started to fade. She became hysterical. She tore away her clothes. She rolled down on the ground seeming quite mad. At this time a snake showed up from nowhere. It slid on to her body. And the serpent started to lick her face with it slender tongue. People who were there, seeing the unusual sight, cried out in fear. They thought the snake would bite her anytime.
Slowly Sudhamani's mind calmed down and got back to normal. She recovered from her fit. The snake slithered away and disappeared just as it had appeared. (Pg 123)

All these narratives of miraculous happenings are baseless and utter lies. On enquiring about the incidents that were said to have happened at the ashram, many people who had known amma since her childhood said they knew nothing of the incidents. This includes her close relatives too, which is rather astonishing and might make one skeptical V K Anandam who resided in the house of Kaladharan testified that the incidents of water becoming milk and panchamritha never happened at this place. "Even the banyan tree was not there as the stories narrated it. The premises of the ashram had no banyan tree. The kissing snake story was also a fabrication. This area around the ashram has become salty, since it is a coastal village. You cannot see usually snakes here. They do

not dwell in a sandy place like this. They do not lay eggs either. I haven't seen a snake at Parayakadavu or in the vicinity in the last 40 years of my life here." he said.

The fishermen also denied the story of having the sea filled with fishes by her intervention. They said they knew of no such incident in their lifetime. Her own uncle –her maternal uncle– Pavizhasenan said this: This incident never happened. Had this happened, we the locals would certainly have known about it. We fishermen belong to the *Araya* community. If she had helped our community, she would have had the approval of the community.

At one moment the fishermen had bad times with no catch for days. She never came to help with the hard times we had. So I and some of the fishermen community leaders approached the district Collector to request help and sustenance. Once he was convinced about the dire situation the Collector allotted 2 kg rice per person. K Karunakaran was the chief minister of the State at that time.

The story of fire balls in the graveyard is not true either. We don't have any graveyard in Parayakadavu. How fireballs could be formed in a graveyard where the graveyard itself does not exist? All the stories that appear in her biography are as much untrue as they are imaginative, to make her seem divine. Her ashram uses electric power to light it up. Nobody has reported an incident of her lighting up with divine power until now. The story of burning of camphor on her tongue is a trick anyone can do with practicing. You need to close your mouth to put out the burning camphor. Then, as the oxygen available runs out, the flames die

out. The wet mouth can withstand the heat for a few seconds. But if you keep your mouth open for long enough it surely can burn your mouth.

WITCHCRAFT

There are numerous examples that prove that all the stories associated with her divinity are nothing but hoaxes and, you can read about some of them.

There had been a suspected problem of witchcraft at the house of Paramu from Chelakottukulangara. So the family went to the ashram to find the truth about it. Amritanandamayi as usual with her, she went into a trance and started to dance. She said while dancing, " Yes ,some one cast a spell on your house. I will come take it away."

Amritanandamayi called on Paramu's residence on a Friday, just after trisandhya, a period in time supposedly between 6 and 7 o' clock in the evening. She asked the people present there to dig in a spot in front of the house. On hearing this Paramu asked his friends Sundaran, Bhuvanachandran, Gopalakrishnan and Sulaiman to help him dig the place pointed out.

Paramu with all of them looking on started to dig deep after wetting the ground with water. When a good depression had been dug, she asked them to go down inside and grope in the pit searching for the hidden witchcraft. But they could find nothing. Then she herself stepped in the ploughed down earth to carry out a thorough search. Some youngsters were watching her closely in amusement.

She did not disappoint either. They saw her quickly take something from her ankle and drop it into the pit. Some of the youngsters, of course, were there to catch her red-handed. It was a copper foil and a small cylinder that contained it. People here do wichcrafting with this these things, usually – a copper pipe with a copper foil curled into it. The youngsters who kept a watchful eye on her caught her red-handed as they planned. So then onlookers interfered and questioned her and there was a heated atmosphere. The people who had brought her by car to remove the spell of witchcraft somehow managed to save her from the furious crowd and take her back in the same car.
This incident was narrated by a teacher at a tutoring institute a Chelakattukulangara, who was also amongst the youngsters who gathered there.

FAILED PROPHECY

The daughter of Rajappan living at Kayalvarath came to the mata before she took her SSLC exams. She asked for Mata Amritanandamay's blessing to get through the annual exam. Amma blessed her so she would pass with a mark of first class with distinction (a score of 90% was required to have first class with distinction). She went to take the final exams worshipping amma in her mind. She strongly believed that amma would make her pass the exams. After a couple of months, the result was in. She looked at the result published. She found the names of many of her friends. Yet her name was not there. After some days the certificate were given out in schools. She received her certificate book and looked at it. Her failure was so miserable, with very low marks. She became horribly depressed. She was the victim of the divine mother

who assured her she would succeed without studying well for the exams.

DEATH NOT FORESEEN

Padmavilasath Sankunni was in bed with illness. At that time, his family used to attend the Mata Amritanandamayi ashram. One day Sankunni died. At that time his family was at the ashram and in front of her, listening to the bhajan sung by amma herself. They came home after the bhajan. The man was found in odd state, and was taken to the nearby doctor's office. The doctor said he was gone many hours ago.

As she claims she has the divine power to foresee things, this incident questions the credibility of the claim. Why is it she could not even foresee that Sankunni was dying and ask her devotees to get home quickly to attend the dying man?

Sometimes she says, foretelling and doing miracles are not in her line. But all of her biographies written by different authors have no page spared to depict her with divine powers and performing miracles. This self-denial points out something she is well-known for. You have seen her criticise atheists in a previous chapter. The same person has said that she knew nothing of atheism and rationalism. She is a god of contradicting her own statements when it comes to her previous opinions and stands.

UDAYABHANU'S TESTING

Udayabhanu worked as a health inspector with the State Health Department. He had never believed in the divine powers Mata

Amritanandamayi claimed to have. So Udayabhanu decided to carry out a test to find whether she had divine powers as the stories kept circulating.

Firstly he wanted to know the things she predicted while she went through a trance and the dancing just after it, called the bhava phase.

Udayabhanu sent his wife instead of going there directly himself. She described the incident later to a rationalist organisation's leader:

When Mata Amritanandamayi was inside, a white man and a woman also joined her. The three closed the door. After some time Mata Amritanandamayi emerged from the room dressed as Krishna. She squatted in front of the small room where she appeared from. She was there for a while cross-legged. Now I sat just in front row, close to her. She did not say anything for a while, then she said to me; "daughter, stay cool. Everything will be alright."

Then she gave me three incense sticks and holy powder, vibhuthi. She nodded me to go back, which I did.

In the month of March, 1990 a soldier came home on vacation in Karunagapally. He happened to know about Mata Amritanandamayi. He became interested in her divine powers. So he came to the ashram with a friend. He asked her why he wasn't married yet, something he felt was long overdue. He sat on the floor cross-legged in front of Mata Amritanandamayi to have the divine foretelling by amma. After a while, Mata Amritanandamayi put her

arm over the shoulder of this young man and pressed him against his busty breasts, then she kissed him on the cheek. After doing this she asked, “why did you come?” The young man said, “to know about my marriage.”

She answered quickly, “Don’t you have a job?” She continued, "It will happen on its own time”. She said nothing more. She released him from her arms. The young man told this to an atheist activist who interviewed him.

This is the kind of prediction and future telling she does. No divinity is needed to make such predictions. These kinds of future-tellers operate by making generalizations about events and offer advice on issues about things likely to happen anyway.

CHAPTER 7

Divine Pregnancy

One major item at the mutt is to woo couples who remain childless towards having kids of their blood. People believe that with her miracle power she could make infertile women fertile. But they need to come to the ashram and prostrate before her and worship her as divine mother. If they do so it is claimed that a divine power will send a heavenly ray from Amma's body and it will enter the abdomen of the woman, and soon after this the woman will carry.

Sometimes she offers fruits after blessing the couple. Supposedly if the couple eat this fruit, they will have a child. Let us see some cases mentioned in her biography involving the birth of children miraculously born thanks to her intervention.

THE CHILD WHO HAD LIVED 16 MONTHS IN HIS MOTHER'S WOMB

According to some claims Mata Amritanandamayi made women gave birth to many children just by imaging it. When a childless couple called on her and prayed for a child, worshipping her, she blessed them to have child. A child according to the quality of the couple was born. Let us see such divine birth stories.

Let us find one more such a divine birth story. Vidyadharan and

Omana had tied the knot about seven years ago. This couple remained childless even after such a long married life. They were very sad, and nursing a shattered heart, Omana's elder sister Sarasamma was a regular visitor at Mata Amritanandamayi Mutt. In 1977 the two sisters came to Vallikavu. An aide of amma told Omana who came to call on amma for the first time, "You came here for a child. Amma will take care of your worries."

Then amma told her that in four months a child would be formed in her. A happier Omana returned home hearing this. Omana found what amma told her turning true with those symptoms of pregnancy. Not only Omana but the entire family became happy.

After nine years since the wedding, she became pregnant for the first time.

Omana worked in a cashew nut processing unit at Puthentheruvu, about 4 kilometres away from Oachira. After a check up at the ESI Hospital in the fourth month, her pregnancy was confirmed. But in the ninth month doctors found she was not carrying. Her belly was bigger, yet the child was not there. They panicked. Omana was brought to Karunagapally Government Hospital. Her abdomen was big unusually, but she showed no sign of pregnancy. Doctors checked up on her. To be clear on this case they took X-ray. They saw something like fog in her body. Once again an X-ray was done on her to double check the fact. Yet the doctors could not conclude anything on her pregnancy. The X-ray revealed no conception. Omana and her family fell hopeless and disappointed. They came to Vallikavu and shared the incidents with amma, with a bunch of complaints. She chuckled in amusement and told them, "Be courageous. This child is not an image,

but light itself. This child is the child of god. Nobody can take a photograph of him. Omana believed completely what amma told them.

But amma's divinity didn't stop there. After a full term, Omana did not deliver. She was ridiculed with a Malayalam proverb, 'Elephant pregnancy', which meant roughly, it may not happen. Some said she was impregnated by amma herself. Some said she would have a snake baby.

Omana and her family were on fire. The only thing they took for granted was the trust they had in amma.

But the incident followed was more than enough to shatter that kind of faith in anyone. Her conception term hit 10 months. It was really 16 months since the first sign of pregnancy.

But Omana still kept a steadfast faith. One a day amma allowed her to go for a hospital visit. Omana was brought to Victoria Hospital, run by the government. A large crowd drifted in to witness the miracle. And everyone was anxious to learn what would happen with her. The doctors were quite worried. Apparently she had a swollen belly and seemed pregnant and about to give birth. But the medical team could see that she was not pregnant at all.
But they decided to operate on her to investigate. It was scheduled and later on she was operated on to have baby boy. Amma named him Shakthi Prasad. (Speeches, Pg 320)

When asked about the incident a leading gynaecologist who was working at the Victoria Hospital in the year 1977, she told the reporter:

"I have been with this hospital for more than 25 years. An incident as such never took place to my knowledge. Let me ascertain this, it is unlikely to happen." Doctor Shajahan who had been the District Hospital RMO also discredited this strongly saying that story had nothing to do with god and miracles. It is a fake story. Experts in health care say that it is never possible for a baby to stay inside its mother's womb after 10 months. It could be a couple of weeks earlier or later. It can't last as long as 16 months.

And the possibility, according to Dr Shajahan, was that she might not have been diagnosed with pregnancy during her first time visit at the hospital. She might have become pregnant long after that, and the calculating of pregnancy become most confusing. Dr Shajahan vouched that it is totally erroneous to believe that X-ray couldn't see her pregnancy. After 4 to 5 months the mother herself can feel the baby inside. Today it is also easy to confirm pregnancy within 3 weeks just by doing a urine test by the mother-to-be herself.

Some women feel that they are pregnant even when they are not, because of illusion or an unstable mind. The science term for this condition is Pseudocyesis. They can show the signs of pregnancy. Even believe likewise. Some patients will make their bellies prominent by 'dressing' up to it, to fake it. If someone is said to have delivered after 16 months, it is reasonable to think that she didn't conceive from her husband, and she might have been impregnated by another man.

With DNA test and blood tests, you can make sure of who is the likely father of that baby, affirms Dr T R Chandramohanan about this pregnancy:

"A human female carries a conception about 16 months and delivers a miracle baby is a kind of story that based on some sort of superstition. It is as simple as that, if you have a little commonsense.

No sane man will spread stories like this, but the biographers of amma know no boundary and are capable of scribbling nonsense like this.

Now let us look at another story with the same miracle childbirth. Hazanarukunju who was from Thazhava, had an infection from the knee down. All the treatments he had to cure it ended up ineffective. So when someone mentioned amma, he thought that he should try his luck. In 1977 he went to Vallikavu. Just after a year he was cured. Subaida was his wife. The couple had been married since she was just 16. Now she was 32. When her husband started visiting amma, she sometimes accompanied him. Neither Subaida got pregnant, nor did she wish for it. The doctors who checked her affirmed that she would not conceive unless she underwent an operation. Maybe she was afraid of the operation on her.

When her husband was cured of his long lasting illness, Subaida began to believe in amma's divine powers.

Before Subaida herself asked for help, amma told Subaida: 'You have a worry about not having a child. Amma will give you a child'. Just one and a half years after amma telling her this she got pregnant. She gave birth in 1979. Subaida who got married in 1960, conceived for the first time in 1978 at the age of 32.

But Subaida and her husband kept the details a secret, since they were afraid of the Muslim community they belonged to. They could turn hostile learning that the couple visited a Hindu god-woman.

In 1979 an exceptionally handsome and radiant baby boy was born to Subaida. The family named him Azim. The Hindu neighbours called him by the nickname Manikandan.

But the mom at Vallikavu gave him the name Sakthiprasad. This boy was very agile and intelligent. He could draw the attention of all. Only amma knows his future. (Pg 321)

Here is another claim concerning amma's powers which are reported in the biography.

P R Rathnamma is another devotee of amma who had the luck of conceiving a son of Mata Amritanandamayi. Rathnamma came to Vallikavu in 1976. But she was not blessed with a child yet, as they usually say. She paid her first visit to amma in 1976. Her heart was troubled because of the fact she was childless. She shared her worries with amma, who then told her, “You wished for a baby, didn’t you? I will give you one. After 10 months, that is in the month of Kubha and at the star sign Aswathi you will give birth to a son.”

Rathnamma conceived as amma predicted. But the hospital she visited expressed their doubts on her conception. Even after doing an X-ray they could not find a child inside. Her husband became disappointed and turned violent, he said,”I will not allow you to visit Vallikavu until you give birth. Meanwhile Rathnamma

had the divine vision, darshan, of amma. This had consoled her to some extent.

She gave birth to a baby boy at the exact time and day amma foretold. (Pg 322) The readers of this should never fail to notice that all the children born out of her miracle or divinity were all boys and not a single girl on the list. That simply takes another mythological explanation.

MORE CHILDBIRTH STORIES

Thankam was the wife of Sarasan. Even after a very long married life, the couple was not lucky enough to have any children. On hearing about amma and her divine powers they came to the ashram; after a few visits one day amma gave her a banana after saying some mantras onto it. After eating the banana, she became pregnant. One day, after the third month of pregnancy, she reeled in acute pain and began to bleed heavily. No doctors were available nearby. The family worried extremely. At this time of uncertainty, amma came to their house. She made juice from tulsi leaves and made her drink the portion. Instantly she stopped bleeding and her pain was gone.

It caught everyone by surprise that amma reached their house at the right time. Amma was travelling to somewhere on a boat with a few inmates of the ashram. When the boat reached near the house of Thankam, amma insisted the boat should halt and she just arrived in time to save the lady in trouble. The boat docked at the house and miraculously the mother-to-be and the baby in her womb were saved by amma. When it was due, she gave birth to a baby boy with the ideal physical signs. The Mother at Val-

likavu called him by the name Unnikkuttan.

All these stories were campaigns targeted at simpletons and gullible people who believe anything they hear regarding amma. As anyone knows it in order to produce a pregnancy the egg in the female has to receive a sperm from a male. If this never happens or there is a problem with the uterus or connected organs, she will remain infertile. Infertility can be treated in some cases. If her sexual partner is sterile, she still can conceive by having sex with another male who is not. Artificial means can also be availed with medical help. Some ashrams do these things secretly and keeping every movement in the dark. Finally, they claim it as a miracle. The gullible devotees will believe this and they never go searching to find the real facts behind the miracle birth.

Some ashrams keep bedrooms for childless women and drug them to sedate them before a man enters the room to have sex with her. Some of the couples know this, though. The husband may have given a silent nod to have this route to childbearing. These men might have desires for having an offspring of their own to whom they can pass inheritance. In cases of infertility or difficulty in conceiving a baby, the husband silently allows his wife to be impregnated by someone else. And these ashrams are a good place for it, and the people around and concerned may take it for a miracle as well, which is beneficial and promising for both parties. This is the prime reason for miracle baby boom.

The ashram is benefitted much more than the actual beneficiary, in fact; they can attract new 'customers' more and more telling about these miracle births. So the vicious cycle continues.

HEAVENLY IMPREGNATION OF A EUROPEAN WOMAN

A well-known journalist, Vayalar Madhavan Kutty, once reported this incident in a Malayalam journal, Eanadu. This is the translation of the report –

Darkness. Only a small earthen pot lamp shimmered. The small room was filled with the smell of burning camphor. And she lay there completely naked. The feeble flames of the lamp revealed her shiny naked body. The white European woman heaved with warm breathing. Her eyes closed in half. Her body was thirsting for something. Then she heard a voice out in the silent air. The voice proclaimed: "Daughter, don't be sad. Lord Bhrahma is pleased with you. A very handsome Gandharva—a celestial male singer—will come to you and enter you. But you should not open your eyes. You shouldn't speak either. You will be blessed with the luck of having a child that was denied to you till now."

"You are truly blessed, daughter." The celestial voice was that of a woman, and in perfect English. She only had to wait a moment. The door opened. A very handsome man showed up slowly waking towards her. He was also completely naked. He opened his eyes and glanced down to see the lying women in front of him. "Son, she is dedicated to you. Take her on and get yourself satisfied and have the blessing of Lord Brahma."

The voice died out; and the lamp too, just alike it was orchestrated in a theatre.

After a month, a cash cheque holding worth of Rupees 6 lakhs

flew from California to a coastal village of southern Kerala. The payee name read "Mata Amritanandamayi Mission". This was a benevolent contribution for what happened in the small dark room that night.

This happened about 25 years ago. The incident that occurred in the dark parlour was something staged perfectly by a 25 year old short and dark skinned woman who is worshipped today as a god-person. And she was the lone witness to the incident in that furtive parlour.

That white European couple, whose story is related here, were seemingly unable to have children. That beautiful woman had been weathering a bad time looking after her sick husband. She was missing out on her youthful years for the sake of the invalid. But the aide who came along with them was his own brother, who was youthful and handsome. When the three came to Kovalam in Thiruvananthapuram they came to know about the divine powers of Mata Amritanandamayi. They also chanced to know that amma had the power to bless couples with children. There had been pamphlets and brochures of Mata Amritanandamayi in almost all hotels in Kovalam that are particularly well patronized by foreigners.

So the couple waited a moment. They decided that they should try their luck in a land that was full of mysteries and miracles. Anyhow, amma well received her visitors and blessed them, with the help of an interpreter so it was not difficult to be understood for both the parties. Mata Amritanandamayi could fathom the problem with the couple in her own shrewd ways. She knew that

the white woman's husband was impotent due probably to his permanent state of illness and his advanced age. She planned a thread of events accordingly. She ordered a month of acute celibacy for the husband along with some yoga and meditations. That poor man had to get up before the crack of dawn and in the chill of early morning and go down to the beach to perform some odd yoga postures. He never knew that his wife was having a good time with his own brother.

The brother could not refuse Mata Amritanandamayi's request to him that he spend a little time making love with his brother's wife. She asked him to undress himself and take care of the nude lady lying on the floor at brahma muhurtha, an auspicious time for making love according to Puranas.

She made him believe that it is a divine ceremony. The woman too was asked to wait for someone in the darkness. She was also told to believe that a celestial human would come to her and sleep with her in that dark room. Amma made her believe that she would be impregnated by her own husband in a mysterious and miracle way. She was excited and relieved much upon hearing that.

After a month of rituals of this kind the couple left for America. After a month passing by the lady showed the signs of pregnancy. The husband happiness was so immense that he wrote a cheque worth a jaw-dropping figure, which finally found its way to the mutt.

The dry coconut tree leaf thatched hut of Mata Amritanandamayi's Mutt pretty soon became a two storied mansion. People

visited this palace-like building incessantly – A self-styled benevolent amma blessed her devotees with relief and support. Amma appeared among the crowd in the apparition of lord Vishnu and goddess Kali, healing away all the illness of the people on the way. She blew into a flute wearing an all-yellow attire after Krishna to entice her woman devotees.

It was claimed that she cured all the incurable illness of her devotees. The crowd grew larger and larger in size. And she blessed the enormous crowd benevolently and lavishly. She was proclaimed as the ever-radiant light of spirituality.

People started to enchant her with a thousand names— sahasranama. They carried out agnihomas and agnihotras several times a year. The ashram was symbolized as the centre of spiritual bliss. Several mansions started to rise up here and there. Foreign cars floated around the ashram. With the money in august foreign currencies, ten times stronger than that of the land.

Doctors, engineers, politicians and such elevated persona queued up at the ashram for her darshan, a holy meet up. Women made up the majority of the crowd. Many of those people who had no children of their own were blessed with children of their own blood.

The number of inmates at the ashram increased by the hundreds. Most of them were attractive, healthy and well to do. Rich people came under the cover of darkness. So many immoral things happened, supported by blind faith, cult culture and the very underworld elements with all its criminality. (*Enadu Daily* 1984, October 17, Wednesday).

To support this reporting we have the anecdote described by her biographer.

Neelu mon—son Neelu—came the first time. During the period, his wife was 3 month pregnant back in America. His story has a background. Neelu mon's elder brother wanted to have a child. He has been childless over a long time. After knowing about amma from his younger brother, Neelu's brother wrote amma. Amma ascribed a mantra to him. She asked him to recite the mantra. After reciting the mantra for a few times, his brother's wife became pregnant. After three months Neelu's brother came to visit amma. He had come alone. After going back home, he sent to the ashram Rs 2,000 every month. (Biography, Pg 186).

CHAPTER 8

Genuineness of Curing Illnesses

Dattan's story was fraught with lies and half-truths; he said he had been cured by mata for his severe leprosy. It has been claimed that Mata Amritanandamayi can cure incurable illnesses. Riding on the power of imagination her biographer had enriched her story with fascinating and incredible narratives of such incidents. Dattan who suffered leprosy lived at Perumpalli near Kayamkulam. People used to see Dattan in and around Oachira Temple. His family abandoned him at an early age, because of his leprosy. He came to know about Mata Amritanandamayi. And he came to Vallikavu to call on amma on her bhava. Dattan testified, "They wouldn't let me into Kalari, he told her, because the stinking smell of the puss coming out of my wounds was that bad. I could not even buy a cup of tea from the tea booths. They will place a pot far away and pour the tea from a distant height to avoid contamination. I could not take a bus. I was not even allowed to lie beside other beggars at the Oachira temple. They will get the foul smell off me. So I kept a distance from all of them.

I would cover my body with a piece of cloth. It would get wet

from the puss coming from my body and the flies would hover all around me".

People looked at Dattan with complete contempt. His eyes were half closed with puss coming through the corners. He had no hair on his head. His body skin which had cracks and scales all over was sheathed in blood and puss. The sight was so horrible. Even the mother of such a person with this horrifying state won't touch him. Though amma was nobody to him, she came over, took him in her arms and laid him on her lap and consoled him with patting on his body softly. Amma ran him a bath, pouring water on his head. Amma would prick his wounds on his body with a trident and let the pus drain off. Sometimes she sucked out the puss with her mouth. She licked his wounds; people possessing yogic power are said to have saliva which is effective in curing illnesses.

Some people who watched this even fainted after seeing amma do like this on this horribly sick man. Some dropped their jaws in surprise. Some vomited. Amma would daub his body with vibhooti, holy ash. She would caress him. Slowly Dattan was cured. After a couple of years, he almost completely recovered.

Amma, who goes beyond the duality of leper's puss and the holy dessert offered to god, was the ocean of endless love and mercy. This fact was hardly understood by either the devotees or critics. The latter bad mouthed about it and the former sympathised with her. They had no idea how to convince them about the glory of amma. Whoever sees this depth and width of this divine love will never fail to surrender before this divine love.

"Mata's divine work, karma, will be praised by everyone. No human language is capable of expressing this heavenly gesture. Amma symbolized the height of selflessness in all its heavenly brilliance. In the presence of this sublime saint, materialism and atheism are just silent (Pg 340-341)

We can find more of such claims in different biographies written by many biographers. It is said that Amma will take in the diseases of devotees and she will end up having many diseases. Many will bring some kind of medicines which would be from all kinds of treatment traditions like homeopathy, ayurveda and more. She will take them just like a child. Nevertheless, amma had said many times that these medicines were useless on her.
Why should she take care of curing herself when she is taking in the diseases of her devotees herself? Can anyone stop karma with pills and portions?

Amma had told her devotees that from the age 20 to 38 her body will show the signs of many diseases. One day amma suffered very much from cough and headache. One brahmachari at the ashram told her, “Amma, give us too your diseases. Let us also experience the suffering.”

Amma replied, “If amma gives that to you, you would not stand the pain.” She elaborated, "Whom can I change my illness with? Once, son Ramakrishnan asked for my disease. I warned him that he would not be able to withstand it, only persons like me who had the power attained through years of long tapas—meditation— can stand it. But he insisted. He went on fasting as a protest. At the end amma gave up.

After a while Ramakrishnan could neither stand nor sit. He reeled with pain and cried aloud. He coughed heavily, and suffered a very acute headache. He was admitted to hospital. It took ten days for him to recover. He was flat on his back. But amma will have illnesses off and on like everyone else and this is not a matter of concern. That is the kind of health amma has. Nevertheless, if I give you one tenth of illness you inflicted on amma altogether, you won't be able to suffer it a single moment. I won't let you go. You won't experience any problem as long as amma is alive. After the lifetime of amma all of you are going to suffer very much."

You can find amma with illness of varying kinds from time to time. These illnesses are taken in from her devotees, with fathomless love. She seemed to be suffering from one illness at a given time, then from a different one. After having cured from the second, a third will affect her. This cycle does not stop. How many diseases does amma have stockpiled in her? She will suffer from them when it is convenient and time for it. Haven't you seen kids keeping groundnuts in their pockets then taking them out to enjoy them from time to time? We might say that amma keeps a hidden stockpile of illnesses that come to light when the time is right.

Sometimes you can see her throw a kind of violent fit. These jerks and spasms are caused by the prayers said by the afflicted and suffering devotees. It is the reaction it brings on her. She will flap her hands in the air. This could be a gesture of blessing to the sorrow stricken devotee, or something unknown. No one knows exactly how to interpret it. She alone knows.

Sometimes she would be seen rolling on the soil of the ground.

Amma says that it relieves her from sickness and pinning down pain. Only amma knows about it. You need to be present at the ashram and watch it for yourself.

Amma says that many people leading a married life worship her through her photographs kept in their houses. When they are going through a particularly troubled time, they will look at the photograph and pray. These prayers will have a negative impact on amma wherever she is. It is the time she feels throbbing pain and rolls on the bare ground.

Of late some women leading a life of questionable virtue had begun to attend the bhava. They came because they had almost become hopeless in their lives and their lives had turned so hard. These women would ask, “Why did you give such a life to us? You didn’t lead me on the right path” They will cry innocently. When hearing them cry their sins will get diffused into my body. If such women touch me, it burns me." (Mata Amritanandamayi Biography, Pg 223, 224, 225)

Amma continues: when they see a lunatic or a leper common people feel hatred for them. However, the wise become merciful. The wise can transmit the disease from that person to themselves. But they will feel the sheer pain for a while on transmitting.

At the beginning, I thought that they should be left with the suffering, for it was their own karma. Then god told me I have no special place for myself. I dwell everywhere, in everyone. Seeing everything in the world as one, as being all encompassing, is the service. I can do it. I have told children that they should not have shared my photograph. But they never heeded. Children will cry

looking at the photo. It will obviously affect me. Even without amma's consent, the illness will move onto me. And I will suffer. When you children suffer from it for ten years, shouldn't I have the suffering for 10 minutes in the least?

When you children touch me while I am on bhava, their maladies pass on to me. Amma must have to undergo some amount of pain on account of this.

If woman of terrible character and impure mind touched me, amma's body would have blister just like having an attack of small pox. Amma said, "I am just like air, like Brahma. So I began to touch people all around me." "I can touch anyone on bhava that is not a problem, generally speaking. But if that person is very vicious, my body burns."
Once a devotee asked her, "Amma, you say amma has to take over the sins of thousands of people and suffer, why is it so?"
Another devotee said, "It is hard for us to see amma suffer."
What can I do? I cannot but own up the sins of my devotees.
A devotee asks, "If you will, can't you take it without getting the sufferings?"
Amma tells, "You are right, I can burn down the sins in the fire of knowledge—gyanagni. But if I do, it will go back to nature and affect the original person again."

It has been claimed Sudhamani a.k.s. Mata Amritanandamayi has cured many illnesses with no medicine including sucking out the poison from snakebites of venomous snakes, making the deaf speak, and getting the bedridden invalid to rise up from his bed. On conducting a query as to the facts behind all the stories like these, it became very clear that these are mere stories fabricated

to serve the sole purpose of making her divine and an avatar of god. For example let us see what happened to the leper Dattan after visiting Mata. She did not look for him. But he continued to live with leprosy for a long time. He was sighted at Arattupuzha, not far away from the mutt, with his leprosy still afflicting him severely.

Kunjupanikkar and his younger brother Karuthakunju who lived at Puthanparambil, a neighbourhood not far from amma's own mutt and they were not just neighbours, they also were her relatives and among the inmates at the ashram. More than being inmates they were intimate devotees of her too.

Karuthakunju was diagnosed with cancer, and had undergone treatment at medical college hospital where he spent a long time battling the disease. The hospital could not do anything when the cancer developed to the terminal point. He went back home, getting a discharge on demand, and died in 1992. Kunjupanikkar died of pneumonia. Amma could not heal them despite his being a relative, neighbour and one of the first ever devotees.

Another example which suggests the limits of amma's powers is that of Ramankutty who came to seek her help for his son. Ramankutty had been teaching at a lower primary school in Mavelikkara. His son had been dumb since his birth. There had been no temple or mosque spared a visit to pray for this boy. Ramankutty became a devotee of amma and for the past eight years he had been bringing his child to Vallikkavu. But his condition never improved. The boy's grandmother, Bhargavi Amma who lived at Padmavilasom, Valanjanadakkavu in Mavelikkara was opposed to her grandson being taken to the ashram. She complained that

a lot of money had been spent at the ashram in order to cure him.

Further examples of the ineffectiveness of amma's supposed powers are numerous, as can be seen in the following examples.
Mohanan who was residing at the forth ward in Shrayikadu of Alappad grama-panchayath had lost his ability to speak years ago. His parents brought Mohanan to the ashram. Mata Amritanandamayi at once gave him some floral petals and water after saying some prayers.

Mohanan continued to have the same disability. His neighbourhood testified this to an activist, Mr Sreeni Pattathanam.
Radha, a woman from Karikode in Kollam had a problem with her neck, which twitched involuntarily. She tried many medicines and treatments. Somebody recommended Mata Amritanandamayi to her. She decided to try her luck on the proposal.

When she met amma in person, she briefed amma about her case. As soon as she finished her story, amma began to recite a mantra into a bowl of oil and offered it to Radha. She instructed her to smear the oil on her body and donate the rest of the oil to the Mannarkkadu Temple. She, as told, gave the oil to the temple several times. She was also asked to donate the same thing to different temples. She did everything amma told her to do. Yet she didn't get to see any results.

What is most ironic is that amma herself didn't follow this kind of treatment when she fell ill, nor did the rest of the people in the ashram either. They took modern medicine, of course. No special lamp oil was ever sent for healing amma or the people of her ashram.

When amma and brahmacharis became ill they did not perform any miracles for themselves, instead they rushed to the nearest hospitals. Once she was suffering from brain fever. She went to the homeopathy clinic nearby run by her uncle. When she had been suffering a bad stomach pain again she was brought to the hospital. There were incidents wherein her father Sugunan went to the dispensary in the vicinity to buy medicines for his daughter. The doctor at this hospital said this. But the doctor on duty refused to give any medicine without having consulted the patient in person. The doctor said to him that either he brought in his daughter or a doctor had to go to his daughter to do a checkup. The doctor did not give in despite the many requests by Sugunan, so he went back to the ashram without any medicine.

Though she goes to doctors for medical care these days, she rather keeps a convenient team for healthcare around in the ashram. Now she owns a multi-speciality hospital, which is notorious for not paying the nurses who work there enough. These under-paid nurses went on strike several times which was on the media from time to time. Dr Hari and Dr Leela were the few doctors to name who treated her in her early days staying with the ashram. Amma takes both modern medicine and homeopathy treatments at the respective hospitals that work on the premises of the ashram itself. You can even see the name boards fixed on the building where they work. Dr Ramakrishnan manages one dispensary usually.

Another relative and neighbour Rajan had his daughter treated at the ashram. And Sankunni from Padmavilasam also took his daughter, when she was a child, to the ashram for treating her discoloured skin, with no result.

Even the brahmacharis of the ashram fell ill and got treated in secret at the same hospitals. When amma's mother Damayanthi was seriously affected some diseases, she was admitted to Kottayam Medical College Hospital hiding it from everyone. Some of her relatives revealed this to their neighbours, and that was how it was known to the public.

At the beginning of the ashram which was located in Parayakadavu they had a dispensary of modern medicine, ayurveda, and yoga therapy. In addition, these health services were under the direct control of the ashram. The ashram had conducted medical camps in many places in the district and the districts around. These things are in dire contrast with the claims made by the biographers that she had divine powers to cure diseases. If she had the divine power, why did they have hospitals right inside the ashram, not to mention the question of having the multispeciality hospital in Kochi, a far away city?

Further examples of this kind can be found in one of the books published by the ashram, Upadesa Samhita—Book of Advice—the examples given below is taken from the book (Pg 352, 353). Amma became sick when she was touring Thiruvananthapuram. A brahmachari accompanied her on the tour coerced her into a doctor's office over there. Amma waited for nobody's permission and entered the doctor's office. The doctor fumed and yelled at her to get out.

Now amma is being treated overseas by Dr Leela, herself a brahmacharini who was previously working at a hospital managed by Shrikrishna Ashram. (*Upadesa Samhita*, Pg 352, 353)

The most ironic thing amongst all this is something very revealing:

We have noticed that nearly 300 pages are replete with stories of miracle cures by amma. The same amma had never waited for miracles to happen when she got ill and rushed to hospitals. She started a huge multi-speciality hospital with millions of rupees spent on it. It earned a good name in excellent care thanks to the qualified doctors who practice there. Needless to say, miracles had no place in those hospitals.

CHAPTER 9

Divine Vision or Illusions of the Mind ?

Prof Ramakrishnan Nair from the nearby township Thiruvalla, who was her biographer, has written that amma's family and her neighbours had said that amma was mad. Here is the translation of what he wrote: The child would walk along the shore, touching the waves and singing keertanas or psalms aloud. But she would walk fast. Her mind would wander about in a state of near-hysteria beneath the endless blue sky above and fathoms of the blue sea, in a state of madness. She would cry calling out aloud to Lord Krishna. When she came home the contained feelings inside would break loose and be let out.

The touch of the cool breeze that followed felt like the touch of lord Krishna, the greatest of lovers. Moreover, she would lose the touch with the world, and faint and fall down on the ground.

When she woke up she cried, "Krishna, Krishna come along." "Why did you go away leaving me alone?" "You abandoned me on an unknown shore?" "I am here missing myself. Come up, oh, Krishna, before these waves of ocean of life gulps me deep down. Lift up me, the fool from the sandy land of lust and distress. You are said to be the reader of minds of the miserable." "Don't you

understand my pains, oh, Krishna? Where did I err to deserve such punishment from you?"
"To entertain yourself with the world you rule, do you need my blood, the poorest of poor, Krishna?"
The child would cry and cry and cry and cry until she collapsed on the sandy ground. The sea that witnessed the sublime madness of devotion and embodiment of divine love expressed by that special girl satisfied itself with the waves that washed away the footprints of that divine birth". (Pg 61)
"Whatever she does her lips will be moving, she is saying her japas, prayers. But more often others don't understand this. This lip moving is just a sign of madness", one of her younger brothers Satheesh Kumar said. (Pg 69, 70)

It was a season of raining. And it was raining heavily. The sound of the falling rain was just a melody. Sudhamani would ask the rain question after question. And, the sound of rainfall would be Ohm. She would chant psalms while it was raining. Everything was the sound of Ohm, the universal mantra.

Sometimes she will feel that she is Krishna himself. And she will assume so. When she is about to cut down the mangrove bushes, the Krishna bhava will possess her, she will find a tree and climb on it. Sitting on some branch of it she will swing her legs to and fro, just like Krishna himself. There will be small kids beneath the tree, whom she will take for gopis and cow herding boys, Krishna's childhood friends, just like in the puranas. These occurrences take place not during bhava, but in daytime when she is with full of consciousness and awake to her worldly identity.
It cannot be taken for pretention, or assumption. Sudhamani behaved genuinely as if she were none other than the avatar of Lord

Krishna. She was around 20 years old then.

At night, I will feel like Krishna is coming to dance with me. We dance together, we play, and we laugh. After saying her daily psalms she will dance in her room, nobody will listen. Radha-Krishna duet, the sweet song of a flute will also be heard. Sudhamani would learn that that sound is not from outside, it is rather from her inner body.

When dancing she will hear the sound rhythmically playing from inside. "But I thought he was playing the flute just in front of me. I will collapse in front of the photograph of Krishna after crying too long, being too tired and losing consciousness. After falling asleep, I would see Krishna standing beside me. He would be in red and light blue colour. A bed filled with flowers. To the bed, Krishna would bring me for a dance. He would take me to many celestial worlds up there.

When walking on the beach she will talk with the mother sea and share her sorrows with Mother Sea. "Sometimes I would think I was mad. Then I got to worry about it. Nevertheless, I would relieve myself thinking, "I am mad with Krishna and the rest of them with worldly materials.

She would imagine that Krishna was walking with her. Sometimes she would go on meditating deeply as in a Samadhi. Then she felt she was Krishna himself. She would have the feeling that the pictures of other gods should be torn apart, including Krishna's. "These photos were just paper and ink, is it not so, Krishna? Krishna is me." The next moment another thought would strike me, "Hey, no! These photographs should not be damaged. It is

this photo that brought me to Krishna. So the photo too is the brahma, the spirit of Krishna."

So we could not say that idol worship is an unnecessary and unbinding thing. It is not enough to carve out good idols. They should represent the idol of none other than Krishna himself.

Sometimes I feel all things are Krishna. The coconut tree in front of me is Krishna. So I would hug it. Nothing is out there that is not Krishna. Me Krishna, everything else Krishna (Pg 90, 91, 92) One day after taking the bath upon completing the meditation at the Kalari the child came out crawling on all fours, and came near a coconut tree, crying out, "amma, amma". Sudhamani had then the feeling that she was the child of Mother Nature, jagadamba, mother of the universe. She would hug the tree taking it for Jagadamba. When seeing the dark clouds in the sky she would think that it was the hair locks of Jagadamba. Mother of the universe had appeared just before her with a sword in her right hand, the sword of lightning. She would stand as high as the sky. The wind blowing fiercely is nothing other than the hissing sound of the mother.

The family felt that she might be suffering from a mental disorder of some sort, on account of her unusual behaviour. "Goddess, you are not a myth; call back your daughter onto your lap." She would cry.

Subhagan, her older brother, thought that his sister had become mad. He never liked the way his sister conducted herself. (Pg 118)

"When going to the sea to jump in and kill myself, I saw mother in

the sea. Therefore, I stepped back. When you are high on bhakti, devotion, death is not a possibility. God will protect his child as a precious jewel. At the peak of her devotion, she would keep talking and sit somewhere until she became very tired to the point of losing memory. After recovering and regaining consciousness, she would begin walking again".

“She would have the feeling that trees are mothers. Water is god. She would lean forward to touch the lake water with her nose and kiss it. When she picked a piece of clothing in her hand, she would regard it as her mother, and then will drop it quickly".
She would cry calling out “amma, amma”,—mother, mother. Holding flowers to her breast she would cry, the wind is also mother; they would deepen her worries and pains of being in solitude.

“Mother, I am lamenting in all madness, because I am deeply sad. Am I not just your child? Do not leave me alone and make me mad, dear mother. If you abandon me, there is nobody else to save me. I am taking refuge in you alone. How can you leave me uncared for?” (Pg 121)

One day amma was returning home after visiting someone. An onlooker told his friend in amusement, “This girl is suffering from hysteria. If she gets married, her sickness will be cured.” On hearing this, his friend laughed aloud. And they enjoyed the joke. Again, he cracked one more joke, “If they had no money to marry her off, I would give 2,000 rupees to help them with that.” (Pg 168)

“Two, three times they printed and circulated notices to stop her

bhava. In the notice they alleged that amma is suffering from hysteria. (Pg 162)
"... then Science. I will declare to those who come and crowd around me that I know neither Science nor wisdom, nor yoga. Then you will ask me, why does amma talk? Amma does sit here? You come and call me amma. I will respond by calling you back 'children'. Everything is a kind of madness (laughs). Sometimes I will think it would be good if someone took me to a mental hospital. Once father Sugunan heard this, he said that he would never mind his daughter's madness. So I'm here, showing trivial and funny gimmicks." (Pg 208)

The girl who is the support and hope of thousands would jump on the back of Damayanthi and Sugunan. She would walk holding onto them and dragging them out. She would play with small kids. Go after them making shrieking sounds. She would lie on the shore of the lake where the water lapped the shore. Onlookers would think she had gone mad.
The extracts from the biography written by her own devotees reveal her state of mind.

She will dance and sing in the room. Nobody will see it. When anybody praises Krishna she will involuntarily stand up and dance right away. She will continue dancing until she drops to the floor, unconscious. This was all she did for as far as sleeping. She didn't sleep apart from this.

If she lies down to get some sleep, she will think, "Hey, someone makes me sleep." Then she will get up and begin to cry. Again she would lose consciousness. Krishna is making me sleep on purpose. He does this so that he can avoid coming to me. She will

curse little Krishna, murmuring in disappointment. She would feel that she was floating up in the air while sleeping. Sometimes she felt like walking in the wild. She would step along taking much care, like balancing herself on a rope. Krishna would come to catch her. She would cry if someone came to get her. Then her mother and father would come running and take her into their bed. After this, she would cry aloud. Then would awake to the reality that it just was a dream." (Pg 89)

Taking them for love, praising, sonnets of Krishna, she would dance in delight. (Pg 25)
"Little brother, have you seen my blue eyed, dark skinned Krishna? Have you ever heard the ever melodious and sweet sound of the flute of my lord?" (Pg 63)

"Back in the day, I looked at the nature and saw god there. I implored and cried. I could not even pluck a flower, because that flower was him. When a wind tugged me, I felt it was him. Everything is Krishna. I could not even touch the earth beneath, earth is Bhagvan, god. Later on, that attitude became a constant and usual, rather than a pressing one." (Pg 92)

“Krishna, I am surrendering my life at your feet. Please have mercy. I am about to die. Won’t you give me darshan even when I breathe my last? I have no worries over dying, throbbing and throbbing with the pain of losing you, oh Krishna.”
Symptoms of imbalance of the mind are what we can see in these statements. Most mental patients will talk about philosophy and religious subjects. They may hear voice and feel imaginary things. They may even take the sound of their breathing for being someone else talking.

UNDER SPELL

One day Sudhamani had a divine vision. She was sitting in a room alone when she experienced this unworldly vision.
Sudhamani was deep in thought, all her five senses withdrawn from worldly matters. All of a sudden, a very bright fireball showed itself in front of her. A fireball as bright as the sun, with the colour of sunset, but looked like moon, orange in colour. That ball was not in the sky, not on earth either. It was revolving. On that globe a goddess was sitting, a crown on her head.
Then Sudhamani called out to Krishna. "Krishna, Krishna, mother has come. Take me to her. I have to touch her and hold onto her."

Amma saw Krishna lift her up and took her very high in the sky. The sights were awesome. Mountains, forests, blue coloured snakes, huge caves and many more. (Pg 110)
These are experiences we associate with the use of certain drugs such as LSD. We can suspect that she may be under the influence of such drugs at times.

SPIRITS OF THE DEAD – SEEN BY SUDHAMANI

After finishing tailoring, the job of hemming was taken out of the house. Sudhamani took the stitched clothes to a nearby burial yard to do the finishing work. The solitude was perfect there. She could also talk with the dead. How many people had been laid here? She would ask them one thing after the other. She was very courageous, and not fearful in the least. She would ask them how their lives were and how they were getting along.
One of Kasthoori's friends died. She liked Sudhamani too. She was laid to rest at this crematory. It was another reason that she

went there. So that she could talk with Kasthuri's friend too. Sometime she would sit there in a meditation posture, a Samadhi, forgetful of the world around for so long.

One day when Satheesan came back from church after the prayers, he could not find her elder sister. She was found sitting at the cemetery, after a long and tiresome search. She was crying sitting there alone. When asked why she was crying, she said nothing. She was crying for no reasons, obviously. We had no idea what Satheesan had thought of her sister who had decided to be a grave yard dweller. There would be no chance that he knew his sister was shedding tears seeing the spirits of the dead, undergoing agonies owing to the sins and misdeeds the dead knowingly or unknowingly had done in their lives in flesh and blood. How could the child understand that his sister had the ability to talk to the spirits of the dead?

After having done the hemming job, as part of stitching, in the open yard of the cemetery, she would enter the church nearby. There was the image of Jesus Christ. She would take him for Krishna. Tears would run from her eyes, thinking about the great sacrifice by him. Then she would go meditate there, alone. (Pg 77)

Psychiatrists say that people who claim they saw gods, spirits and the dead are mentally sick. These people could be suffering from Xehoglossia, hysteria and varying degrees of schizophrenia.
The story of her having talked with spirits in the cemetery is either a fabrication or a possible mental disorder of some sort suffered by her.

CHAPTER 10

Comparison with a Hot Actress

TK Hamsa, the then Chief Whip at the Kerala Legislative Assembly compared 'Silk' Smita, an item actress in the southern Indian movie industry, with Mata Amritanandamayi. Smita was hailed as sex-bomb by the media then. Why did Mr Hamsa match Smita with Mata and not any other actress in the film industry? He chose only the so-called sex bomb. One reason could be that she chose the path of sexuality to woo devotees. This was also a kind of way with Bhagvan Rajneesh who stood for free sex in all of his ashrams.

Sitting alone in a closed room, she would be visited by male devotees. She would pull the devotee onto the warmth of her lap and murmur some matras into his ear. Sometimes she would hug them standing aright. This could have sent shock waves through the spines of these men. It was more than erotic in a society that starves for sex. Most Indians live a sex-deprived life due to the cultural taboos for falling in love and making love. The enticement she makes surely is on purpose and not an innocent one. Vayalar Madhavankutti, a well-known author in Kerala explains his encounter with amma.

When I rose to my feet after bowing before her, she waved me to come close. I stepped to her closet through the stairway. The room was small. She, amma, again gestured to sit there. When I was about to sit down she suddenly hugged me. She pressed my face against her shoulder. She hugged me against her breasts. It was a situation where one should be embarrassed and excited at the same time. But it was expected long before I came in. It was okay with me. I could even sense her breath on me. What could be next?

She pressed her lips against my ear, and whispered, "Son, I know all of your problems, amma will set everything right. Don't worry. Everything will be right." That sweet voice will make anyone spellbound. That voluptuous body of a young woman will have more than an electrifying impact on any male. That sweet smell and warm body is just erotic. (*Enadu Daily* 1984 October 18, Wednesday)

This experience was similar with all men who visited and were hugged by her. Her objective also was to evoke such a feeling. She based her success mostly on this.
So it is not wrong when someone compared her with the hot superstar Silk Smita.

When A K Antony hugged her in 1995 a well-known literary critic in Kerala, Sukumar Azheekode observed that he had degraded his own mother by doing that.

People called her a spiritual guru. To become one, had she made any contribution being a visionary or anything of the sort? Then how did she reach this position, with little formal education?

You can read the story behind her phenomenal growth in a news piece written by P K Thambi in a leading newspaper in Malayalam, *Kerala Kaumudi*. It was published on 18 November, 1982 in that newspaper. This is how he tells it.

One late evening a girl from Parayakadavu of Alappad panchayath went to her neighbouring homes for bhajan. Her name was Sudhamani. As she sung a bhajan, she was so obsessed and became hysterical. She moved her body in frenzy. The people attending the bhajan began to believe that some godly powers possessed her. Sudhamani who learned how to dance presented herself as Krishna and Durga. The crowd began to get bigger and bigger every day. Young men from well to do families were attracted. Chanthu was one among them. He brought an American with him, whom he had become acquainted with at Thiruvallamalai in Tamil Nadu. Chanthu brought him to Parayakadavu. Thereafter many foreign nationals started to flock in.

After the presence of some foreigners like them, she became well known. Many high profile people crowded in in no time.

She went on from this chain of events to establish herself as a corporate-style spiritual leader or more than that. She undertook the so-called social uplift programmes, which helped her even more to institutionalise her spirituality industry. She was more than lucky to enjoy the trust of very many devotees. As she carried on to own more institutions like schools, colleges and hospitals, she grew to become a powerful person whose influence in the ruling class grew to the point where the government itself found the need to be lenient to her. Speaking out against her was hard for those in power for many reasons. She has invested mil-

lions of rupees in multi-speciality hospitals and endowed university and engineering colleges scattered across the country.

She has taken advantage of her position of strength to get the nods from the governments to build all these. She has a history of encroaching on the lands earmarked for protecting sensitive environments like lakes and watersheds.

Some sections of the political domain are encouraging this conwoman who has misled people with charities, preaching and bhajans.

When T K Hamsa compared mata with the film actress many people protested it and there was a huge outcry in front of both the Secretariat and Legislative Assembly house. The agitators demanded that Hamsa apologize.

The protest only subsided after the speaker of the house agreed to remove the statement from the assembly records.

Zacharia, a leading literary figure in Malayalam wrote about this: Amritanandamayi Mutt's Muttadhipati, president, reportedly criticised T K Hamsa's comparison of amma with film actress Smita in these words :
"It happened in a country where it is believed that where women are being worshipped there god's graceful presence will be. Comparing amma who has followers all over the world, to a third-rate film star shows the abysmal fall of sense of values."
The actress who has been described a third-rate actress is Silk Smita, a young women from Andhra Pradesh who committed suicide a few years after this incident, owing to some pressing

problems. She was playing vampish roles in sexy dresses. She performed for the Indian men, who have the pompous tradition of Arsha Bharat, to support herself and her deprived family. This industry is infamously cruel and mindless. It offers a thriving career for a few top film starts, and the rest of the men and women are not doing well financially. [Note from the translator : The Indian film industry is the largest one in the world, leaving Hollywood a second position. In 2020 it grossed Rs1000 cores in turnover. Yet this industry failed to support her and she killed herself unable to handle the problems that were eating her up. She hanged herself from a ceiling fan; this happened on 23 September, 1996. It is noteworthy that Smita was younger than mata].

The muttadhipati was a person who was supposed to see every human being in equal terms. He is supposed to see god in every one. So according to the press reports regarding the Smita-Mata comparison, the muttadhipati called Smita, along with many others who did the same, a third rate film star. In the speech, he quoted the proverbial appreciation for the woman folk – God is there where women are revered.

The muttadhipati who received sanyas-hood, should have shown more maturity, in recognising every human being as the progeny of god. Mata and Smita are the creation of the one and the same god. So how can they be treated differently?

No man has the right to degrade and belittle a woman who is living on the income from the demeaning films. It is patriarchal state of mind. The person who acts in films is different from the one in real life. The actor is just acting out his or her part in the movie. A rapist in the film should not be taken for an actual rap-

ist, should he? Is this kind of response appropriate?
Can the rapist in a film be charged with rape? If not so, why is it different for Smita, who acted to entice the audience?
— Zacharia, *Kerala Kaumudi* magazine, issue no 1193, July 19, 1998.

CHAPTER 11

The Beginning of Kissing and Hugging Mata

Mata's darshan on her bhava is something special and renowned world over. "When she started this in a small hut, she sat on a stool with short legs and murmured something in the left ear of the devotee". One of her early devotees says, "Then she developed it into a complete hugging ceremony. Many who had been there since her early days at Parayakadavu, have agreed on this transmission from ear-lip murmuring to full body hugging. On the darshan day the Kalari will be readied early. Then the pictures of deities hung from the wall will be decorated with garlands. Traditional oil lamps will be burned. Fragrance sticks, bananas and holy powder, vibhuti, will be given out to those bhakts as prasadam a —holy remembrance of god, as an offering to those who would come for the bhava. Usually it is Gayatri, a foreign national, who is in charge of all these arrangements.

A description of mata's darshan is given below; it gives an account of what she did in the early days of her career.

Once the Kalari is ready for the pooja before her darshan, the

temple door opens. Amma will move an oil lamp held in her hand circulating around the Krishna idol there, throwing off flowers, a deeparadhana is being performed there, worshipping with many lamps lit around. A conch will be blown and the air will be rent by its sound. Bells will chime loudly. The crowd who poured in will start worshipping the deeparadhana. Amma will sit down turning herself westward and facing the idol made from rock. Then she will begin to sing a Krishna keerthanam, "Oh Krishna, fill me with your mercy".

This is the prayer-song she usually sings at this occasion. While she is singing the song of bhajan she will gradually assume the Krishna bhava. An appealing and attractive smile will blossom on her face. She will come to her knees observing a chin-mudra position. Somebody close to her then will burn an incense stick and hand it over to amma, who will move it circularly holding it in her hand. Her mother Damayanthi Amma will slide a tulsi —holy basil —leaf into her mouth. She will slowly chew, then swallow it. She will go and stand on the silk cloth placed at the south-east corner of the Kalari, then she will stand in the same position till the Krishna bhava leaves her. Meanwhile the bhajan team will go on with the bhajan accompanied by the orchestra.

There is a separate queue for men and women devotees who came to have her darshan. The devotees stand up after bowing before her, and then she will press her middle finger on the forehead of the person who happens to be in front of her, the touching will last a while, then she holds the head of the devotee to her right shoulder. She listens to what the person has to share with her.
This is the description of her darshan program detailed in the official biography.

At the outset, the younger men found it interesting, it being a rare chance to hug and kiss a young woman in her late 20's. The whispering also had an enticing effect upon them. They were very much excited and thrilled. It seemed that she too exploited the same feeling in her own way.

Mata's father Sugunanandan and her brother Subhagan knew this. It became an open secret in the neighbourhood. People began to gossip about the family. Feeling the heat of shame both men wanted to stop bhava and darshan that took place in their home.

Let us see what her biographers have to say about this situation of body contact with the crowd of worshippers —
Amma who sees every person as an equal was mistakenly criticized for her hugging and subjected to humiliation when she touched everyone freely. The unfaithful started to disgrace and taunt her. Sometimes they infiltrated into the crowd that gathered for bhava and asked her annoying and unnecessary questions. This worried Sugunanandan. She was meant to be married off one day. If the bhava continued like this it would end up bringing even more shame to the family. Therefore, he decided that this should be stopped. Her elder brother also thought along the same lines.

Some biographers say that she wouldn't even know it when her clothes were stripped from her body. One day a person gifted amma a pen. She started to laugh holding the gift in her hand.
"Son, what is the point in giving me this pen? After a day or two I might hit it against something and break it into pieces and throw it away. And, I would not even feel it if my clothes are taken off of

my body. How can such a person keep this pen, my son?."
The biographers say that whenever the unmarried amma finds any person whom she is attracted to, she will go grab and hug him and put him on her lap.

While having lunch one person yelled out, "Chandrumon came." Hearing this amma stopped eating and rushed out with the hands still smeared with leftovers and she began to cry hugging Chandrumon. Just like a kid.

She shoved him onto her lap and brushed his hair with her hands. Then pointing out Venu,she said, "Venu is the same size as Chandrumon and has the same ways of being a nuisance and of misbehaving."

The videos taken while she was on foreign tours suggest the same. She has always professed her spiritualism with deep hugs and kisses. She may be enjoying a form of sexual pleasure remaining unmarried so long.

Journalist Madhavan Kutty has described another encounter with her—

On a day in the month of Makara—a Malayalam month that falls between January and February—we reached Vallikavu, near Karunagapally taking a bus. It was a cold evening. As we got off the bus a melodious song in a high pitch was filling the air.

Walking on the path of delight
Dancing and singing on a day
At that moment

All passions and lust
Vanished into my depths
I forgot myself and
I united with
A golden dream
The budding desires in my mind
Came dear, slowly.

The song was very beautiful and we rushed down the path of delight, wanting to meet her before it was too late. As we reached the shore on a boat, and left the ferry; we walked about a 100 feet, there two heavy men with dark skin came running to us.

They stopped us. "Where are you going? What do you want?" We had a previously thought out reply with us. We gave him the letter given by the omnipotent god's professor son.

"We came here seeking amma's grace. We are devotees of amma. No sooner had we finished answering than they began to allow us in saying, "Come along, amma is conducting bhajan. Today is the day for bhava. Come see Bala Gopalakrishna—infant lord Krishna —bhava assumed by amma.

The voice was heavy and strong. They obviously were one of the inmates. Anyway we didn't have to struggle much, as we had a letter of introduction. We reached the entrance of the temple where the bhajan was progressing. A melodious song was filling the otherwise silent air—

Amma is caressing
The forehead with

Her golden hands
My life is devoted to amma
I stay bowed
As that divine light
Came to my inner soul.

People gathered there, from children to elders were patiently waiting with half closed eyes. Most of them are affluent, among there are some hefty women. Everyone has a single goal, a same voice.

Where is Amritanandamayi?
All eyes are searching for her.

There comes amma, Mata Amritanandamayi. She was singing a bhajan forgetful of everything. The voice was sweet. To sing with her there were a band of people, including women. Foreigners were also very close to her. Suddenly we noticed it –

Amritanandamayi is on her feet. Two foreign men also stood up by her side. The temple door was open. They entered it briskly. The door closed. Minutes ticked away. What was going to happen next? We kept watching all the scene that was unfolding.
Suddenly the bell inside the temple began to chime. The door opened. All devotees prostrated themselves on the ground joining their palms together, saying their prayers. We looked inside the temple and saw the apparition. The goddess had appeared before the gathering.

Anybody that sees the sight for the first time will be taken aback. A smiling face and an attractive curvy body of a woman appeared.

She wore a satin blouse and was wrapped in a thick red saree. She had a crown on her head, a sparkling nose-ring with a diamond in it and bangles on both hands. An *adyanam*—belly chain—adorned her nude waist. Her face was brilliant thanks to the make up on it. But those hands had no makeup on them, so they remained the hands of daughter of Sugunanandan and Damayanthi, whose skin was still dark. She was just 31 and around 5 feet tall. Two white women, all attentive and with tempting appeal were fanning her with venchamaram—a white featherlike hand-fan. They were doing this standing on both sides of mata.
"Oh, this is devi-bhava, right? A photograph was about to be taken. An inmate of the ashram coming out from nowhere stopped the would-be photographer. "No! Amma will be angry. Nobody can say what will come of her anger! Don't invite her wrath. Fall before amma and praise her." We did salute her.

She drew her lips close to my ear and whispered, "Son, I know all your problems. Amma will set everything right. Don't worry, everything will go fine." That sweet voice would attract anyone like a magic.

It lasted for just five minutes. After this a white woman standing near me held my hand and raised me to my feet, and showed me the door to go out. When I was about to leave, after my turn, a *sanyasi*—monk—who was sitting beside a donation box grinned at me, with a look of greed. Seeing him grinning at me, I dropped a 10 rupees note to the box.

Amma continued her hugging show with a relentless smiling. We waited outside – one of the main inmates, who was well educated came to me.

"You cannot see amma any time now. She will take hours to come back, maybe, sometimes it could be after midnight. So you could go to the hut, and take your food." He spoke in an artificial and polished language. We walked with him.
The wind that blew was sending waves of sheer cold. The seashore was lying before us bathed in the moonlight. It was so beautiful. They have provided accommodation in one of the huts on the shore they managed, which where around the ashram.
There was a straw mat to sleep on and an earthen jug with water to drink from. The hut smelt of something foreign. We could find fag ends of cigarettes and emptied bottles of liquor. The holy ashram was just like that.

Notable Malayalam poet Balachanran Chullikad once took part in a literary camp. He was very young at that time. A student darted questions at him. He openly asked Balachandran Chullikad why he visited Mata Amritanandamayi's ashram. He cracked a joke in reply: In Kochi a kiss will cost you more than 100 rupees. It is for free with amma. And that was the reason why he went there. Kureepuzha Sreekumar, another well acclaimed Malayalam poet, was also present in that literary camp. He narrated an incident that happened about 35 years ago. The camp was conducted nearly a decade ago.

Poet Kureepuzha Sreekumar, said at the camp that about 25 years ago, Mata Amritanandamayi came to a house near his locality, to exorcise an evil spirit from the house. She was accompanied by a band of people. Sudhamani, after doing some pooja, stepped into a pit there. Someone poured some water into the pit. She then stepped down to the bottom of the pit and took out a small copper foil. She then declared that the family had been cursed

10 generations ago, and that that was the reason the family was undergoing hardships now.

Interestingly, neither the copper foil nor the capsule which contained it was any older than 10 years, let alone ten generations! She was caught red handed by the volunteers of Vallikizhu Brothers' Club and Library.

The growth from Sudhamani to Amritanandamayi is an indication of how sick society has grown now. People who go there are suffering the illness that can be put in the category of mental problems of some sort.

CHAPTER 12

Is Mata a Saviour ?

Several deaths have occurred in her ashram, a considerable number of them are suspicious, if not all. They were able to cover up almost all the suspicious deaths that happened there with utmost success, leveraging their influence, money and close contact with the people in all levels of administrations. Let us take a look at a few of them that happened in the ashram and that ended up sounding the alarm at that time. There could be very many deaths that the ashram successfully hides from the press and the public. It is noteworthy to find that as she flourished, more and more cases of death surfaced and reached public attention, then quickly vanished from public memory and this could be due very much to the increased influence she has achieved of late.

DEATH OF RAMANATHA IYER.

Below is the report published on the New Indian Express daily on 6 September 2001 under the little Police Seek Information about Suicide Victim—

POLICE SEEK INFORMATION ABOUT SUICIDE VICTIM

Express New Service / Kollam, Sept 5 : The body of Ramanatha Iyer, 55, a native of Mumbai who is said to have committed suicide by jumping from the 12th floor of a building at the Vallikavu

Amritapuri Ashram has been kept the mortuary of Kollam district hospital.

Karunagapally police put out an appeal to the public today to pass on to them the details about Iyer if they had any either by phone or in person or to the Amritapuri Ashram.

Probe Sought: Bharatheeya Yukthivadi Sangham State executive committee had demanded a crime branch probe into the death of Ramanatha Iyer, who is said to have jumped to his death from the 12th floor of the flat at the Ashram.

In a statement here today the BYS State Executive alleged that mystery shrouded the death of Iyer.
Six other persons – Subhagan, Narayanankutty, Dilipkumar, Bhaskaradas, Darumdhar and Sitharaman were also found dead at the Ashram earlier under mysterious circumstances.

The Bharatheeya Yukthivadi Sagham (BYS)—Rationalist Association of India—had submitted a memorandum to the Chief Minister and the Police in this regard.

CHAPTER 13

The Death of Her Own Brother

Professor M Ramachandran who is the biographer of Mata Amritanandamayi has observed that the death of Subhagan, the mata's brother was not of a natural one. "Hearing all this, Father Sugunan grew impatient. Once he asked the devi – goddess Mata –, "Is this the only outcome you, amma, have brought about?" People call me the murderer of my own son." (From the Biography of Amma written by M Ramachandran, Pg 163). At this time, the enemies of amma had been working enthusiastically on a campaign under the organization, Committee for Abolishing Superstition. Now Subhagan's death provided a new life to their work. The battle found a new pitch with the death of her brother. They had not cared to take a last glimpse of the dead man, instead they turned violent and started abusing mata after this event that came along handy and useful.

"Where is she? She should be held responsible for this death. She killed the young man. He is no more just because of her." They shouted and fumed with anger. (Pg 163)

One can also find a statement made by the mata that just justifies

the allegations levelled against her by her critics:

A mentally disturbed Subhagan abused a Muslim lady-devotee of amma who had come to see bhava, Amma's divine transition into a particular deity, like Kali or Krishna, when during her bhavas she behaved just like the apparition that was supposed to have taken hold of her.

The Muslim devotee, along with some other devotees around, came to amma and described what had happened. They also sought some form of retribution against her brother. After hearing their grievance, amma consoled them: "Annan's (brother's) years are counted. That is the reason he behaves so." (Pg 149)
One day amma said to her mother, Damayanthi, "I don't believe annan—elder brother—will live much longer." (Pg 148)
After the death of Subhagan, the relatives of amma kept themselves away from her family and refused to connect with her in any way.

The people of the location acted the same way. Read what her biographer has to say on this:
After the death of Subhagan, all of her kith and kin hated her. They refused to be associated with her. They kept their distance as far as possible. They behaved as if the house Idamannel did not even exist on the shore.

They never invited people at Edamannel to any wedding ceremony, or to any public functions of the kind.

It is remarkable that no relatives gathered at the house to share her grief with them on the passing away of her brother. Instead

they just went to the seashore and splashed milk into the sea as part of the after-death ritual and went back home. (Pg 165)
One can also read what her biographer has to say about this premature death of Subhagan.

Subhagan never let his sister go with other women to fetch water. She was permitted to go alone only. If he happened to hear that she went with her friends, he would beat her. He insisted that bad company would corrupt her.

Subhagan kept the very strict rule that women folk should behave with modesty and dignity. In addition, he never missed an opportunity to hurt her at any of the violations of this rule by her. Subhagan held the view that wearing a spotted blouse was indecent and showing too much of pride. Once Subhagan snatched the spotted blouse from her and burned it. (Pg 68)

Her *mootha annan*—elder brother—would ask often:
"Why the hell do you scream at the top of your voice? Is your god deaf?" (Pg 70)
The brothers of Sudhamani felt shame and ridicule. And they insisted that she stop having bhava that pulled a big-size crowd. (Pg 101)
Her elder brother Sunilkumar alias Subhagan tried his best to have her bhava discontinued and to discipline her. He also pressed to marry her off. He employed several tricks to achieve this end. Once he and some of his male cousins took her to one of their relative's house and locked her up in a room. They told her that she had brought a bad reputation to their families who had lived a life of decency until then.
They finally warned her:

"Either you stop your ugly dancing programme or we will kill you." (Pg 103)

It provoked Subhagan when his sister touched people around and blessed them during her bhava. He tried all means to keep the bhava from being performed. He set up several blockades to do so.

One day Subhagan broke the oil lamp kept at the kalari to light up the place. (Pg 104)

On another occasion, Sudhamani was lying on her back on the seashore in front of her house. She was smeared with sand on her face and body. The devotees' heart melted when she was spotted this low. They could not put up with the sight any longer. They approached mata's father, Sugunan and shared their concern. Sugunan and the devotees took the 'child' home. They laid her in the bed of Subhagan, her brother.

When Subhagan got back home after work, he saw his sister in his own bed. He grew impatient at the sight. "Who put this filthy creature in my bed?" he shouted with uncontrollable anger. He threw her onto the floor along with the bed. Subhagan broke the bed into pieces after that. (Pg 105)

Subhagan thought that his sister had become mad. He could not digest and accept everything his sister did. And he continued to beat and abuse her. He kept doing everything to put an end to her bhava.

Another day the 'child' was about to enter the house just after

bhava. Subhagan blocked her standing in front of the doorway.

He yelled, "Don't come inside. Come here only after you finish your ugly hip hop and singing once and for all."
The child sat on the porch of her home, taking this as the will of god. But Subhagan insisted that she should not sit there either. (Pg 118)

Recently amma's elder brother Sunilkumar alias Subhagan seemed to be having change of behaviour. The house was forced to keep strict disciplines, when he became an atheist eventually. Subhagan could not go along with what his sister did. He would not permit to have her bhava performed for the crowd that turned around to watch and be entertained.

He found it difficult to have the bhajan and the devotees at his home. He also worried that some of his atheist and rationalist friends kept ridiculing him and making him a laughing stock on account of his sister's acts.

He also tried to drive out the people who visited their place to take part in bhava. (Pg 148)

Amritanandamayi felt extremely disturbed concerning the resistance on the part of her brother. Her father began to back his daughter, since he realized that the money her dancing and singing brought in was more than what he managed to earn by selling fish. And the money kept flowing in with little hard work.
Over the course of time, the father stood by his daughter and openly supported her.

The father favoured her bhava along with its dancing and singing, and the brother was vehemently against it.

More often than not, the house witnessed exchanges of fiery words between them. One evening Subhagan told his father, "You may have no qualm of mind selling your daughter and living on the money. But I do have it selling my sister and living like you." On hearing this Sugunan turned so violent that he dealt his son several severs blows on the stomach upon which he fell on the ground. The furious man kept thrashing him violently which could have led to the death of Subhagan.

This incident was said to have been narrated by mata's mother Damayanthi to her neighbourhood in Parayakadavu. Quite soon, the relatives hurried to do all they could to make this bloody murder seem a suicide.

It is said that mata's father with the help of an aide, one of his friends who lived nearby, Kunju Paniker alias Sofia (He is a man, of course, don't get confused and take him for a woman because the other name suggests otherwise) managed to hang the body of Subhagan in a cheelanthi tree in front of their house. Parayakadavu neighbourhood also supported this narration regarding the death of Subhagan.

Somebody reported the incident to the then Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) of the location, Ms V K Anandam. She immediately informed the incident to the local police. The police came to the ashram. They untied the body from the tree and laid it on the ground. Thereafter the body was taken into a makeshift booth, southward of their home, where the post-mortem

was done. The post-mortem was done by Dr Gopalakrishnan Nair who was a surgeon at the Government Taluk Hospital, Karunagapally.

NO INQUEST; NO FOLLOW-UP PROBE.

"The people who opposed us even tried to make father Sugunan the murderer of his own son." She expressed her concern. (Pg 149) What mata's biographer had written as a mere accusation by the locals could be considered to hold some water. Many people around share the story even now. Mata Amritanandamayi's home was not very far from Karunagapally police station. After the death of the young man, the police had done a post-mortem on the body with a government surgeon, yet thanks to influence and money the police never bothered to do an enquiry into the incident which could have produced evidence that later investigations might have prompted other conclusions about this untimely death.

At the police station, the only incident recorded formally on that day was about a struggle staged by Kerala State Electricity Board workers. This makes it more suspicious that the police had been influenced to hide many things.

CHAPTER 14

Death of Satnam Singh Mann

Satnam Singh Mann was a law student who was taken into custody for creating disturbances at Mata Amritanandamayi Ashram at Kollam on 1 August 2012. He died of alleged torture on 4 August 2012 in custody. At the time of his death, he was a student of Dr Ram Manohar Lohia National Law University, Lucknow. Mann's relatives had stated that they will approach National Human Rights Commission for justice. He had completed his schooling at Bishop Cotton School, Simla. He had three siblings. For five years prior to his death, he had been undergoing treatment at Bihar Institute of Mental Health at Bhojpur for paranoid schizophrenia. On 1 August 2012, he attempted to barge his ways into the podium of Amritanandamayi at her ashram in Kollam.

He was unarmed. According to police, he was screaming and reciting words in Arabic. He attacked security guards and then was overpowered by devotees, who handed him over to the police. He was later taken to Government Mental Hospital, Peroorkada as he was showing signs of mental instability.

The superintendent of the mental hospital stated that there were

no injuries on Mann's body when he was brought to the hospital. After being admitted to a mental asylum, Mann was attacked and was physically tortured. He died as a result of the injuries sustained in this attack. He was taken to the Medical College Hospital, Thiruvananthapuram, but was declared dead on arrival. During autopsy, 77 injuries were documented on his body. He was only two weeks short of his 24th birthday when he was killed.

THE PROBE

Kerala Police ordered a Crime Branch probe into the death of Mann. The special investigation team concluded that the warder and an attendant had attacked Mann. Four inmates of the mental asylum had joined the two. According to the report, Satnam was beaten with a cable wire and his head was smashed against the wall. Vivekanandan, the jail warden, and Anil Kumar, attendant, were arrested in this regard. In the report to the high court, the Special Investigation Team (SIT) revealed that the cause of death was injuries sustained to head and neck. The incident was termed a 'custodial murder'.

Mann's relatives later demanded independent probe in to the matter by CBI. This demand was conveyed to the Chief Minister of Kerala, Oommen Chandi. The Chairman of National Human Rights Commission, Justice K G Balakrishnan gave his opinion that the death was suspicious.

In contrast, a press release by Matha Amritanandamayi had also demanded a probe into the alleged attempt to murder Mata Amritanandamayi.

LATER DEVELOPMENTS

On 3 April 2014 the high Court of Kerala considered the petition submitted by Harmindar Kumar singh, father of Satnam Signh Mann, asking for CBI to probe into the death of his son. During the course of hearing, the Public Prosecutor admitted before the court that there were some 'omissions' in the investigation. The High court demanded police to file a statement on this issue. Meanwhile, CBI informed the court that it was not willing to take over investigation of the case.

It is popularly believed that he was murdered whilst in the custody of the police, who had been influenced by the amma devotees to perform extreme acts of torture on him. This is not unusual since she had many devotees in the police force of the State including its top brasses.

CHAPTER 15

Death of Narayanan Kutty

One of Kerala's most trusted newspapers in English, *The Indian Express* on 19 April, 1990 had carried an article on the death of Narayanan Kutty, one of the regular visitors to the ashram and a long time devotee of Mata Amritanandamayi. Narayanan Kutty was from Vallappalli House, Madathilparambil Veettil in Kodungallur, a respectable extended family of the location. He was a very close relative of former Chief Minister of Kerala too. His friends and relatives knew Narayanan Kutty as a man of values and ethics. He always questioned those who were corrupt. He tolerated no injustice. He was active on the modern Malayalam literary scene for some time in the early seventies.

PROBE SOUGHT INTO DEATH OF MAN HELD BY POLICE

Express News Service / Thiruvananthapuram, April 18:
A demand has been raised for an enquiry into the circumstances of the death here on April 4 of Vallappalli Narayanan Kutty, 37, of Kodungallur, arrested by the Karunagapally police from Vallikavu

in Kollam district sometime in the middle of February. Mr V K Rajan, MLA, representing Kodungallur, on Wednesday appealed to the Chief Minister to order a Crime Branch enquiry into the death as it has raised doubts among the people of his constituency.

Narayanan Kutty, who is related to former Chief Minister C Achutha Menon and Agricultural Minister V V Raghavan, died at the Thiruvananthapuram Medical College Hospital after having been rushed there from the Thiruvananthapuram Mental Hospital two days earlier.

He had been under treatment at the District Hospital, Kollam on the orders of the judicial first class magistrate, Karunagapally, before whom he had been produced by the police on February 16 as a 'wandering lunatic'.

The police had reportedly been picked up the distraught and frail stranger from Vallikavu junction after Narayanan Kutty had a tiff with the management of a local ashram where he had been a frequent visitor of late.

Mr Ramesh Rao, who is in charge of the ashram told *Express News Service* (ENS) that he had reported Narayanan Kutty to the police after he tried to disturb the peace at the ashram. The police said they nabbed the man as he was found loitering.

Narayanan Kutty had, on more than one occasion, invited the wrath of the local police who mistook the mentally ill stranger for a thief. But Kannan, a local CPM youth, who claimed that he and his friends had escorted Narayanan Kutty to the ashram gates,

said that some ashram inmates had man-handled the man from Kodungallur.

Narayanan Kutty, who was working as a clerk at the State Government Bureau of Economics and Statistics in Thrissur was reported missing from his house and office early February. Relatives said they were in the dark about Narayanan Kutty's whereabouts till April 10 when they identified his body at the hospital mortuary where it had remained unidentified for six days. Police and hospital records mentioned his name as Sathyadas. The post-mortem report with the Thiruvananthapuram revenue authorities said that Narayanan Kutty had died of internal haemorrhage.

A Malayalam daily, Janayugom, also published a detailed report on how and why Narayanan Kutty died. Here is the translation of the story ran by the paper on 22 April, 1990.

SAD DEMISE OF NARAYANAN KUTTY,
THE SPIRITUAL SEEKER

A youth who was a seeker on the spiritual path died mysteriously. The unfortunate man, Narayanan Kutty, came from Madathil Parambil in Kodungallur. Narayanan Kutty died suffering from the injuries physical attacks inflicted by the commandos of the devotees in the ashram of Mata Amritanandamayi and the police who apparently supported the ashram.

Last February he came to the ashram along with his wife and two children. The family had stayed at the ashram for two, three days. He spent all his money with him there and to go on in the ashram he had to pledge his wristwatch with an inmate for Rs 700

and went back home later. He came to ashram again with some money and saw the inmate to whom he pledged his watch and asked for it. The inmate abused him. Both sides exchanged heated words. But Narayanan Kutty never got his watch back, and was beaten. All the money he brought with him was taken away from him by the inmate and his aide.

They sent him to the other shore. After reaching the other side of the lake, he told his story to the people there. Kannan, a DYFI member, came in to help him. Kannan took Narayanan Kutty back to the ashram with some of his friends.

When he was about to get onto the boat some teased him, "Are you going again to get yet more beating?"
But they ignored it and reached the other shore on the boat. The instant they set foot on the shore, police were brought in on a complaint made by Ramesh Rao, who was in charge of the ashram.

A devotee who came for the blessings of amma was taken to the police station where obedient police officers there thrashed the poor man harder than the inmates of the ashram did.

This is not the only mysterious death that occurred in the ashram. Neither is it the last one that happened over there.

Amma's own brother Subhagan and Bhagavata reciter Bhaskaran met their horrible death, which were also a mystery as of writing this. The police never probed these cases. The ashram was regularly visited by high-ranking police officials and politicians, so nobody could move a step so as to find out the culprits.

KANNAN'S STORY ON NARAYANAN KUTTY

When a reporter approached V K Anandam, who lived near the ashram to know more about the incident V K Anandam's husband asked his son, Kannan, "Child, was there an incident about Narayanan Kutty? Describe the things to him. Things like this should come out in public."

Kannan narrated the incident in detail –

When I was standing near the college with my friends Baby and Sasi, a man came over. He was very much tired. We asked him what was wrong. Gasping for a while he told us the things that happened to him.

My name is Narayanan Kutty. I work at Bureau of Statistics and Economics Department's office in Thrissur. My wife's name is Sympathy. She worked at the Thrissur Head Post Office as a clerk. We came here with our children to visit Mata Amritanandamayi's ashram. We stayed here for two weeks. And we ran out of money. It turned out that amma lost interest in us after seeing that we were penniless. And the love and care she had for us dwindled. So we decided to go back home. We asked some money from amma, the brahmacharis, the inmates and anyone there for travelling expenses to go back to our place. Nobody gave the bus fare even as a loan. So I pawned my watch with the ashram inmate, and with the money he gave we went back home.

When I reached my house, it was incredible that the sanyasis had taken over my house. I asked them to vacate my house. They were

unwilling to do so.

After a week I went to the ashram with Rs 700 in order to get back my pawned watch. This time I was accompanied by no one, I was alone. I called on the brahmacharis and gave them the amount as to pay back the loan. They took the money and went away. I waited for hours on end. But no one came back. At last I met the brahmachari to whom I gave the sum and asked for my watch. Then he asked me what watch I was asking for. When I told him that if he didn't have my watch, he should give my money back; He then asked what money I was referring to.

Then I insisted that he give me either my money or the watch I pledged with him. At this point the brahmacharis and other inmates of the ashram ganged up around me and attacked me.
I managed to save myself from the beating. I boarded the first boat that I saw which ferried me to this shore. I walked up all along here since I had no money for the bus because I lost my wallet while battling them.

After hearing him Baby, Sasi and I told him that if he could come up to the ashram with us we would get the money from them. Narayanan Kutty agreed this.

So my friends Baby and Sasi and I went to the Mata Amritanandamayi ashram. But I accompanied them only as far as the jetty since most of the people in the ashram knew me. We are relatives. Before Mata Amritanandamayi became a god she used to come to our house regularly. She even had the freedom to reach our kitchen and get the food there. She would take the food on her own and eat it. So we were that close. That was the reason I

avoided my presence there in a bad circumstance like that.

Next, the three men boarded a boat, then the oarsman of the same boat said, "This guy, just left the place after being beaten up. Are you going again to get another round of beating, dude?" They replied nothing.

The boat reached Parayakadavu. The stepped way led to the ashram directly. No sooner had Narayanan Kutty stepped on the ashram ground, than the inmates began to beat him. Neither Baby nor Sasi could say a thing or stop the beating. He was once again beaten black and blue. After being manhandled so brutally, he was dragged on the boat and his assailants shouted out:
"If you were murdered and thrown into the deep lake nobody would question us."

Seeing them much organized like a band of gangsters the three men figured that it wouldn't make sense to stand up to the rogue men; and they returned joining the people who were walking down the road.

People around there volunteered to collect money for Narayanan Kutty, a sum he would need to go back. But soon afterwards Narayanan Kutty was apprehended by the police.
Kannan ended his narration.

The mysterious death of Narayanan Kutty was reported in a Malayalam newspaper, *Deshabhimani* on 20 April 1990 as reads below.

V R Rajan, MLA, requested to the Chief Minister of Kerala that

none other than the Crime Branch of the police should investigate the death of Narayanan Kutty that took place under suspicious circumstances. Narayanan Kutty, age 27, was admitted to Thiruvananthapuram Medical College Hospital from an ashram at Vallikavu, near Kollam with serious injuries.

Later his relatives could see his dead body in the morgue of the said hospital.

The locals suspect foul play there. Throughout the locality people protested, yet no official probe had been carried out in the best of my knowledge.

Janayugam Daily reported this incident in details on its 22 April 1990 issue—

DEATH OF NARAYANAN KUTTY
AND THE GROWING MYSTERIES

Kodungallur, 21 April :
The mysteries surrounding the death of Narayanan Kutty of Vellapalli House, who died in the Thiruvananthapuram Medical College Hospital in the evening of April 4 require more probing. Narayanan Kutty, son of Narayana Menon of Vellappalli was a regular visitor in the Mata Amritanandamayi Matt ashram at Vallikkavu, Karunagapally. Narayanan Kutty reached Mata Amritanandamayi Matt in February. This devotee of mata had been a regular visitor at the Mata Amritanandamayi ashram at Vallikavu, Karunagapally.

Narayanan Kutty reached Mata Amritanandamayi Matt ashram

on 4th of February. This devotee of mata frequented her ashrams in Vallikavu and Kodungallur.

Narayanan Kutty died at the Thiruvananthapuram Medical College Hospital on 4 April. But his relatives learned of it much later, that is on 10 April. Mr Boban, his brother who is also the husband of the daughter of minister V V Raghavan who was in Thiruvananthapuram too could not get information on the death.
Narayanan Kutty who hailed from Vellappalli House is an employee at Statistics Department of Kerala government. Professor Aravindakshan was his brother. The ashram of Mata Amritanandamayi Mutt is on the property of Vellappalli, an ancestral property of Narayanan Kutty. Narayanan Kutty had his share of rights to this property. Though he was an ardent devotee, it was his character that he fought all forms of corruption and injustice. His relatives learned while they visited the place that police had taken him to the police station before he was beaten up rudely by the inmates when he was there. Ramesh Rao, in charge of the ashram, and Narayanan Kutty got into a heated argument there, it was said.

When Narayanan Kutty was attacked, he managed to save himself by running away to a neighbouring house. When the locals came on, his attackers ran back to ashram, according to the eye witnesses. The death of Narayanan Kutty has caused many suspicions among relatives and the people in the vicinity. They have written a complaint to the Chief Minister of the State.

CASE REGISTERED AGAINST MATA AMRITANANDAMAYI

Amritanandamayi, who turned into a godwoman by means of spreading incredible stories of divinity and plotting of organized vested interests, is thriving exhibiting herself as a devi, goddess and an avatar of Krishna.

But the gang that is behind her comes and intervenes wherever there is a problem at the ashram and works hard to see no case is registered concerning this living god. They enjoy the company of devotees and care of political leaders and the support of the ruling class including the Prime Minister.

If anyone inside or outside the ashram opposes them, some of the inmates often threaten that they might meet the same end met by people like Subhagan and Narayanan Kutty. These kinds of ashrams not only destroy the society by furthering the superstitions and cult culture, they also get involved in crimes whereby lives of ordinary people like Narayanan Kutty are endangered.

Some ministers and parliament members support Mata Amritanandamayi like her benefactors, so it is unlikely that she would face any legal consequences as extreme as charges of murder.

So the mysterious Mata Amritanandamayi Mission's dark side is hidden from the public thanks to the high level connections. As of the report going to the printing press, Remesh Rao has not yet been arrested or questioned. Karinattu Murali, a native of Kodungallur and an active member of the youth wing of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), and the Democratic Youth Front

of India (DYFI) pasted a poster against Amma and her mutt on the door of her ashram at Kodungallur. Seeing the poster the sanyasis at the ashram dragged Murali out of his work place into the ashram and thrashed him black and blue.

Murali later approached the court and the court ordered for a police probe.

The incidents of Narayanan Kutty and Murali prove that it is not uncommon for persons connected with the ashram to beat devotees and others who have turned inconvenient.
— *Janayugam Daily*

MATA AMRITANANDAMAYI IS THE ACCUSED NO. 1

The report published in Madhyamam a daily in Malayalam on 15 May 1990 is shown below. This report affirms the incident was something that truly happened. According to these reports, Amritanandamayi including 30 identifiable people were declared accused. Kodungallur first class court magistrate O K Namboothiri ordered that the police take up the case for more probing, in which mata's role was mentioned in clear terms as the first accused.

The plaintiff, Murali, stated that he had been grabbed away from his workplace and brought to the ashram and beaten up for fixing a poster that demanded justice for the demised Narayanan Kutty.

PAST CHIEF MINISTER ACHUTHA MENON'S DEMANDS

An evening daily reported about the demand made by Achutha

Menon, who was the most popular past chief minister of Kerala, and one of the most respected politicians in the State of Kerala:
Thiruvananthapuram : Previous Chief Minister of Kerala, Achyutha Menon has been quoted to have registered his deepest of condolences and strong protest for not having made any enquiry into the death of Narayanan Kutty, followed by the beating he was subjected to as the inmates of the ashram manhandled him.
(*Nattuvartha Evening Daily*, 25 April 1990)

CHAPTER 16

Death of Amma's Cousin

Another mysterious death occurred in connection with Mata Amritanandamayi . The victim was none other than Pradip Kumar who was the cousin of Mata Amritanandamayi, her father's sister's son. He had been married to a close devotee's daughter. His wife Sheela filed a complaint with the then Chief Minister to demand an investigation of the untimely death of her husband. To add more to it an action council was set up wherein T K Soman was the president. The council staged a protest meeting at Parayakadavu. It was said that Mata Amritanandamayi herself oversaw the wedding of her cousin. Anyhow, Pradip Kumar and Mata Amritanandamayi's father had locked horns over the dowry and the gold ornaments of the bride. In the meanwhile, Pradip Kumar went to Kochi Fishing Harbour on a job he got there. But he was arrested by the police sub-inspector Haridas at Velloor police station at North Paravur. According to the police report he was produced before the Vaikom Magistrate Court and remanded on judicial enquiry. While he was in the custody of police, he was admitted to Kottayam Medical College on 16 August, 1994.

On 17th of August receiving the telegram, which said that Pradip Kumar was in serious condition, his relative came to the Medical College Hospital and when he arrived he was able only to see his

relative's body in the morgue there.

Pradip Kumar's wife Sheela sent a request to the Chief Minister, Leader of the Opposition and MLA PS Sreenivasan wherein she said that Pradeep Kumar had died from police manhandling while he was in their custody. Just before the post-mortem, his body was seen with blood running from his mouth. A wound was sighted below his knee. In addition, the wristwatch and the gold chain he used to wear were not on his dead body.

She also demanded that the authorities suspend Sub-Inspector Haridas from service and conduct a probe into the case.

Pradip Kumar's brother, Edamannel Sasi also wrote a complaint to Chief Minister E K Nayanar and the District Collector of Kottayam. The brief of the complaint is below—

Pradip Kumar was sound and fit with no health issues. He was trapped in a fake case and was made to appear before the court for some unknown and mysterious purpose. His death was so unexpected, despite knowing his whereabouts, the police never informed the relatives about his arrest and the custody following it at the concerned police station.
The inquest and post-mortem were carried out in an improper manner.

The death was a mystery for the relatives and the people of the location. An action council that was formed for the cause of justice for Pradip Kumar on which T K Soman was the president, K Rajeevan, VV Satheesan and S Sasikumar were other members. The action council also pointed out the illegal police arrest and

his custody following which he was murdered. They campaigned for a protest meet on 24 September, 1994.

Being a close relative of amma, Pradip Kumar might have known some inconvenient secrets regarding the ashram or its myriads of deals, so this may have been a reason to finish him off.

CHAPTER 17

Dhuramdhar the Historian

It was in 1996 that Dhuramdhar the painter became a devotee and an inmate of Mata Amritanandamayi Ashram. Dhuramdhar was the son of the king Ramavarma Thampuran of the linage of Kolathiris of Chirakkal in Kannur and V Madhavi Kettilamma. He became attracted to spiritualism when he was pursuing an Engineering course at Benarus University in 1946. He post-graduated from many universities in India. He spent most of his life in Mumbai. He was unmarried. He died on 15 June, 2000. The ashram never informed his family or friends of his death. After a week, some of his friends learned of it. He was as sound as a bell and had no health issues. His friends said that his death is a total mystery. When he died the people in the ashram cremated his body very quickly.

An advocate by profession Cheerath Prabhakaran and his friends made a complaint with the government wherein they said that the death of the historian was not a natural one and this case demanded further investigation to find out what actually happened. But nobody cared to probe the case.

DEATH OF PARAYAKADAVU BHASKARA DAS

This death is also very suspicious just as the death of Subhagan, mata's own brother, which is presented in a previous chapter.

Bhaskara Das was a devotee and an inmate of Mata Amritanandamayi ashram. He was a destitute person who renounced all the worldly pleasures to be a devotee of mata. He supported his family with the meagre income he earned by reading out Bhagavata, a holy script, at temples.

Being an ardent devotee of Lord Krishna, he kept an ambition for leading a hermit life at an ashram. This call made him an inmate at Mata Amritanandamayi Mutt.

Long ago, he became a regular visitor at the ashram. He had the ability to read out stories in a crystal clear voice owing to being a pundit in the Sanskrit language.
The reading aloud to audiences by Das soon became a main attraction. The rest of the devotees often requested his reading. Days became months after he joined the ashram. Then one day he was found dead.

The youth at Vallikavu staged a drama in protest of the unnatural death. The name of the drama was "Computer". But the police scared away the people who managed to stage this.
Some relative of Mata Amritanandamayi, Pavizhasenan and Rajeevan, narrated this incident in one of their reports sent to activists agitating about the death—

As it was usual Das went to the ashram on Thulam 10, ME 1157 (the Malayalam Era) to read Bhagavat and see amma. Before he returned from the ashram he drank a cup of milk. He got home and a little later he was seen suffering some uneasiness. He died a while later. Those neighbours who rushed to his home hearing all the shouting and noises discovered only his life-less body.

This information was collected from the neighbours who had been there that night. Something unusual and illegal happened at Mata Amritanandamayi ashram and the only outsider who knew of it was Das. This might have led to the death of Das. This is the view the neighbours shared on this tragic event.
This death connected to the Mata Amritanandamayi Mutt could revolve around something they had to hide from the public. This could be one reason why the ashram supported his family which is so unusual with them. The family received Rs 8000 to build their house and some maintenance money was sent to the family every month.

Considering other deaths that chanced at the ashram this could also be suspicious.

DEATH OF SIDDHRAMAN

An inmate of Mata Amritanandamayi Ashram, Siddharaman, who hailed from Basavanu Bagewadi Taluk of Bijapur in Karnataka, living in a house in Kesavar Nagar, son of Bheemrayi, aged 22 was found dead on 2 May 1998. His body was beached on the shore here.

OTHER DEATHS

On 29 November, 1996 another body was found beached and this was reported by Sugunananda Vilasom Karayogam, a congregation of neighbourhood, near the Karunagapally police station. Another body also beached near the ashram on 10 April 1997.
About 20 people have been found dead likewise. In addition, this

list included many foreign nationals from Britain and France, both men and women.

Abind Bonn, a Frenchwoman, aged 44, fell down from the multi-storeyed building at the ashram and died on the spot. This was the 13th mysterious death at the ashram, as of the date of this reporting.

CHAPTER 18

Mata's Uncle's Complaint Against Her Father

KP Senan was a paternal uncle of Mata Amritanandamayi. He had been a Leftist activist and an outgoing person having membership with many progressive organisations for a long time starting from his early years. He led a life of principles and fought against those elements in society that tried to mislead and corrupt the public with cult-culture, faith-mania and god-men. Senan had pointed out many times in public that Mata Amritanandamayi and her stories of her divine avatars were complete hoaxes. Growing intolerant and angry about this, Sugunan, father of Mata Amritanandamayi threatened Senan in 1990, following this Senan filed a complaint to the Chief Minister of Kerala and the corresponding police authorities regarding this. On account of this complaint, the circle inspector at Karunagapally Police Station summoned Sugunanandan and warned him that if anything happened to Senan he would be responsible. And he made him sign up precaution note on this.

HER UNCLE'S COMPLAINT

The text of complaint written by Senan is shown below—

Pavizha Senan, residing at Ananda Bhavan at Parayakadavu

coastal village of Alappad panchayath in Karunagapally makes herewith a grievance cum complaint petition to the District Superintendent of Police.

Sir, I am a person who resides at the Fourth Ward of Alappad Panchayath, a coastal village in Karunagapally taluk. I am a social worker and an activist who works for the fishermen's community here, people which make up most of the population around. I am also the District Committee member of the Communist Party of India (Marxist).

The ashram has influenced the government enumerators who work for taking the details of those citizens who are eligible to cast votes. The ashram sought to enlist the people in the ashram who are permanently residing in the ashram on the voters list. This obviously was arranged by influencing the authorities by means of bribing.

When the government agency published the draft of the list, it was found that many of the people who figured on the list had little connection with the place. They included some foreign nationals too. When I chanced to see it in my personal capacity as an activist and a social worker of the place, I felt obligated to act and wrote a written complaint.

The government has taken action on my complaint too. Due to the complaints the troubled office staffers at Mata Amritanandamayi Trust and Sudhamani, known also as Amritanandamayi, her father Edamannel Sugunanandan, alias Maadyan and a person from his circle of relatives, Karunakaran alias, Mooppankutti who is residing in the house Sathyalaya and a few others turned

hostile to me.

This being the background, on 24 November, 1990 around 11 o' clock in the morning I was walking through the road than ran beside the ashram compound reaching to Vallikavu, when all of a sudden father of Sudhamani and his relative Karunakaran rushed to me and stopped me to threaten – "Man, we will kill you. If we did so nobody in this country will ask about it. You keep living here on our mercy. But you won't be able to live for long."
My life is in danger because of this threat. I strongly feel that Sugunanandan and Karunakaran and their gang will do anything to take my life. I will not be able to stop this violence on me. They are very influential. They have gangs in India and abroad that can carry out anything they wish.

So I humbly ask you to do what is necessary to protect my life from the crimes intended against me by conducting an immediate investigation into this.

Pavizhasenan (S/d)

On producing this complaint with the District Police Superintend, Pavizhasenan mentioned the police officer this—
My friend Sreeni Pattathanam has written a book in criticism of Mata Amritanandamayi recently. 'Is Mata Amritanandamayi a Divine Mother' was the title name. In this book, I helped the author let the facts out behind the so-called miracle performed by her, which clearly shows that many of the miracles were either cheating or taking advantage of the gullibility of people who witnessed them. This could damage her claim to divinity. This aspect may partly account for the enmity towards me.

CHAPTER 19

Mata's Father Attempts Rape of Manimallika

Manimallika, an adherent to Sadguru Mata Amritanandamayi, had made a complaint against the father of the sad guru, the virtuous trainer, herself. According the account submitted before the Honourable District Superintend of Police, Kollam Sugunanandan attempted to rape her. When she resisted it, he turned more hostile and used the influence he had to torture her with the help of some inmates at the ashram. Manimallika was surely not the first or only victim of his. There might be more women that were hapless down the way. Yet apart from Manimallika incident, a few came to light. Incidents like this must have occurred often, as the organization became more wealthy and powerful. The money and the power it brought them helped them to cover up a lot. Yet the case of Manimallika stands out with a clear written documentation.

The Complaint Made by Manimallika with Kollam District Superintendent of Police—

I become a disciple of Mata Amritanandamayi when I was taking LLB course, after finishing my post graduation in Philosophy in

the year 1987. My guru recommended that I renounce everything to serve god by embracing the life of a sanyasi, a monk. Then Amma asked me to live with her own parents.

When I was drinking water in the kitchen on 2 January 1998 amma's father, Sugunanandan beat me on my back and shoulder and shouted at me, "Get out of the ashram." He also thrashed me pulling my arm. He abused me a lot. This attack was quite unexpected and I was so frightened and I collapsed. I somehow managed to pull myself into a nearby house. I stayed there for a while. I reached a government hospital and was admitted. Dr Azeez and Dr Surekha Beevi treated me. I was discharged on 5 January 1998. I furnish my medical report herewith.

His enmity and extent of anger with me that prompted him to attack me physically is described below—

When I was living with Sugunanandan and his wife Damayanthi in 1993, the former was then as old as 75 years, and a fatherly figure for me. He insisted that I do immoral things on him. He said, "I have enjoyed so many devotee women here. I have everything here. Those who are obedient and can put up with my things can stay up here. You must obey my will."

As he kept pressuring me I left that house. And, I lived in several neighbourhood houses.

When the guru was back home from foreign trip I wrote her all about this. This only redoubled the hostility of Sugunanandan and his family.

They made it impossible for me to stay in any of these neighbourhood houses any longer. This brute had influenced some in the ashram and with the help of some swamis, whom he could trust, those persons who used to stand by amma at her darshan, like Ramachandran and Mahadevan, the European ladies like Janani, Theresa and Prabha continued harassing and hurting me. This February, 1998 an inmate by the name Sadasivan Pillai asked me out pretending that he had something to share with me, when I went with him to the place he asked to be, he beat me. When my friend there, Ammini, asked me why he was hitting me, he turned to Ammini and beat her too.

Both of us were admitted to the local government (Taluk) hospital. When the police officer came to the ashram for probing my case, they said they knew nothing about it.

A devotee name Amminikutti, aged 17 at that time delivered a premature baby dead, which was fathered by Sugunanandan. And she was thrown out of her own house. Nobody knows what became of her. Even after a long one and half years of her missing, she is yet to be found. It is believed that she was caught in the custody of Sugunanandan and his henchmen and murdered eventually.

"From the Prime Minister down to all the ministers and judicial chiefs prostrate at the feet of my daughter. Whomsoever you complaint to, nobody can touch us. Even if you were murdered nobody would ask a question." Sugunanandan and his wife Damayathi had said this many times to me.

When we found that we could not stand the torturing by the

white women, my friend Ammini and I complained to the women's commission in June 1998, and were given a receipt number 6357/47/98. But no action has been taken on it till date. The locals say that he will murder me anytime. I request that you protect my life. If I went missing the person responsible for it would be Sugunanandan and his henchmen only.

Taking advantage of being the "father of the goddess" he is misbehaving with many female devotees including myself. I request you to take action against such a hypocrite and save us women from this brute by penalising him in an exemplary manner for these crimes.

I beg you on and on.

My address is given below.

A K Manimallika, Amrita Sargam, Desam Post Office, Kunnumpuram, Aluva.

CHAPTER 20

The Money Lending Taken to the Courtrooms

Mata Amritanandamayi Mission was registered with the Registrar, Department of Registrations, Government of Kerala on 6 May, 1981. The main objectives of the mission were charity and uplifting poor people [Rules 1(A,D)]. In contrast to the first objective the mission was meant for, what the Mission did was taking action against two members on the Mission itself; P K Rajappan and Indira, showing no trace of mercy and empathy. It's a story of cut-throat money lending, leaving no room for mercy anywhere in its course of events. A shameless and drastic deal had been perpetrated by the Mutt, which ironically was supposed to be acting for the cause of truth and charity. This mindless and inhuman money lending business will shame even the most scrupulous of moneylenders.

More or less an exact translation of documents such as complaints, writs written in Malayalam is made keeping in mind that they will give a good insight for the readers, to get first hand information.

Sudhamani is mentioned some of the documents here as Damayanthi Sudhamani, which is the expansion of her initial D. In records, her name is D Sudhamani. The surname is absent in most of the names of south-Indian people. They instead use the initial/s of their father's and/or mother's name/s. Examples : K S Kaurnakaran may be the contraction of Kuttappan Sukumari Karunakaran, K being the Initial of his father's name, and S, his mother's. Likewise, V Karthikeyan is Velayudhan Karthikeyan.

Below shown is the petition (writ) that had been submitted before the Judicial Court, Karunagapally by the plaintiff —

A complaint is stated and submitted by the plaintiff Velayudhan Sugunanandan, age 56 years, of Edamannel House of Parayakadavu, coastal area of North Aryanad of Kulasekharapuram village, who is a fisherman by profession, acting here as the power of attorney to Damayanthi Sudhamani, age 30 years, the plaintiff's daughter, who is doing sanyas, a Hindu young woman living in the same house, Edamannel House, to the effect of getting back the money the complainant has borrowed from D Sudhamani with all the interest on principal from the complainant, in accordance with the Rule CC Act 26 —

All the procedural documents can be availed through correspondence made to the address detailed above.
P K Rajappan, age 56, retired teacher, living at Kayalvarathu House, of Puthuprambu in Shrayikkadu costal area of Perinad Village is the complainant of this case.

The Grievances

Para 1

The complainant has asked the plaintiff's daughter, Damayanthi Sudhamani, of Edamannel House, on 8 February, 1982 to lend him Rupees Six thousand One Hundred and Sixty (Rs 6,160) and Paise Thirty Five (Ps 35) for the wedding expenses of the complainants daughter.

He has agreed the contract that he will pay back the money soon after the wedding of his daughter, violation of which will be effecting the consent of the complainant to confiscation of the property or properties, moveable or immovable, of the complainant to make good of the principal amount along with an interest at 20% annum. The complainant has received an amount of Rs 6160 ps 35, on which an agreement has been signed by both the parties on a Five Rupee stamp paper. The document was handwritten by complainant himself, and the witnesses signed thereon are Ramadas of Thurayil Kochuparambil at Srayikkadu and Gandgadharan residing at Dharmalayathu House at Kulasekharapuram.

Para 2

Following this the complainant had failed to pay back the money he borrowed even after the wedding and he promised many dates to pay back, none of which he honoured. Sudhamani and her people had demanded the complainant to pay back the amount with 20 percent interest rate. They demanded it through an advocate by serving a registered notice by post. Having all these efforts brought no result, this lawsuit deemed the only way for a

solution for the plaintiff.

Para 3
Since Sudhamani is a pursuing a life of a sanyasi, a monk, she has appointed a nominee to take care of her legal issues, her own father, Sugunanandan, who is now the plaintiff. This appeal is presented before the honourable magistrate on the date of June 12, 1984 as the 55th case of the court, signed duly by the Court Registrar.

Para 4
In the jurisdiction of Perinad, the complainant had borrowed an amount from Sudhamani, which commenced to produce an interest staring from 8 February 1982 that should be added to the principal.

Para 5
The plaintiff is entitled to get an interest of 20 percent according to the contract and, to this effect an appeal is made before the court.

Para 6
The interest @ 20 % that has been accumulated since 8 February, 1982 to till date and the amount borrowed make the total to Rs 9085.95, (i.e., Rs 6160.35 + Rs 2925.60). The court fee for this amount in accordance with the Court Fee Act 22, has been paid which is Rs 889.

So the court has been appealed to issue an order to the effect that the said due amount and addition of the court expenses and

the original sum Rs 6160.35 be charged from the complainant by means of exerting right on his movable and immovable properties.

S/d Advocate

Case Number : 1984 Civil 389 @ Judicial Court, Karunagapally, Kollam.
Date : 12 June, 1984
Copy of complaint.

CHAPTER 21

Counter File by the Accused

While the counter petition filed by the accused P K Rajappan was very clean and legible, the odd amount of Rs 6160 ps 35 was obviously part of a sale of gold or something else. Normally moneylenders give cash in some rounded off figures like 1000's and 10,000's which is quite reasonable. So this irregular number should have had raised a question regarding the authenticity of the plea to the court at the time it was submitted. The incidents narrated happened decades ago, yet the court records are clear enough to prove things beyond doubt. She is not an innocent guru who has abandoned all worldly things, but a greedy animal who is ready to hurt even a soft and meek target.

Case Number 1984/C/389; the accused P K Rajappan, age 56, teacher by profession, residing at Puthuparamil, Kayalvaram Veedu, Srayikkadu costal area in Perinad village, states in this submission:

1. There is no truth, or any reasonable content in the complaint submitted by the plaintiff. He has submitted his complaint sup-

ported by false details.

2. The complaint cannot be sustained on legal and factual grounds. The documents the plaintiff has produced do not carry enough stamp duty to make them legally valid.

3. The documents produced along with the complaint intended to validate the power of attorney are neither legally bounding nor valid.

4. Paragraph 1 of the complaint reads that the complainant has borrowed money from the daughter of the plaintiff on Feb 8, 1982 a sum of Rs 6160 ps35, is false. I deny that statement. Complainant has not borrowed the said sum. Plaintiff is running a trust named Mata Amritanandamayi Mission on which the complainant and his wife Indira are members.

At the time of the wedding of the complainant's daughter, he has bought gold jewellery weighing 10 sovereign at the then market rate of Rs 1336 a sovereign. Adding a making charge for the items, the total worth of the jewellery was fixed at Rs 14160 ps 35. Of this sum Rupees eight thousand has been settled on 2 August, 1982 as a part payment for the sale.

For the unpaid amount a promissory note had been given. This is contrary to the argument of the plaintiff, that the complainant has borrowed money in cash.

All these details are known to Sudhamani, as it seems to be. Sudhamani and the plaintiff as her nominee are close relatives. Sudhamani keeps signed documents given by those who borrowed

money from her as the proof of transaction. In such transactions, she charges heavy interest, so she scribes 20% interest rate for the purpose of showing other customers and clients the heavy interest she charges. But what happened in this specific transaction was that Sudhamani and the plaintiff had agreed to a contract wherein it was clearly stated that the complainant had only to pay back the balance on monthly instalments of Rs 100, taking a two year long tenure to finish off the deal, paying no interest of any kind. It was witnessed by Mullassery Bhadran and some others, made on the date of 8 February, 1982. So the 20% interest rate shown was only for the sake of showing other clients of Sudhamani.

5. The wedding of the daughter of the accused was on 9 February, 1982. On that day an amount of Rs 7167 was received as donations from people who attended the wedding of which Rs 2000 was paid to Sudhamani in the presence of the witness Dharmalayathu Gangadharan, whose name is mentioned in the first paragraph of the complaint, by the complainant himself in the presence of his wife. After this; from 3 October, 1983 to up to 10 May, 1984 and from 10 August, 1983 to 10 March, 1984 the accused has paid Sudhamani Rs 100 every month witnessed by people who understood the deal firsthand.

6. The accused and his wife being official members of the trust formed by Sudhamani, and seeing that she was not making a record for the money she received as pay backs and otherwise, also finding that her devotion was just deceitful and not genuine, the accused demanded Sudhamani in her own residence to show the accounts regarding the money borrowed. This prompted her to file a lawsuit against the accused using her father at the behest

of her.

7. The second paragraph of the complaint is false. As stated in the para 5 of this counter petition the accused has paid Sudhamani the due amount after the marriage of his daughter. The plaintiff has wilfully not mentioned this fact in his complaint produced before the court. It is also false that Sudhamani and her associates directly demanded money from the accused. The accused has duly replied to the notice served to him this regard.

8. Third paragraph of the complaint by the plaintiff is false which states that the said Sudhamani is leading a life of a monk. Sudhamani and the people associated with her are working like a mafia, which makes the unaccounted gold into gold ornaments and sells in the market. She uses her image as a spiritual leader to facilitate this lucrative grey business. She uses her father as a tool to execute the operation needed for this. The accused has no knowledge that the plaintiff is a nominee of Sudhamani.

Considering the peculiar nature of this case, the honourable court can summon Sudhamani before it and demand the account books for the scrutiny of the court in order to find the truth behind the arguments.

9. Ninth para of the complaint is false. The plaintiff has no reason to file a lawsuit against the accused.

10. The accused has no liability to the amount stated in the complaint, and claiming an interest at the rate of 20 percent for the said sum is not admissible on this ground. Sudhamani has made her father the de facto Plaintiff only to take advantage that the

money she received as the settlement for the amount lent to the complainant won't be accounted or credited to the principal amount borrowed.

11. An additional affidavit should be required of the plaintiff to have clarity on this.

12. The complaints raised should not to be permitted and the court expenses of the plaintiff should not be imposed on the accused thereof.

13. The amount of Rs 6160 paise 35, which was due to Sudhamani was repaid up to Rs 4,300. The accused is ready to pay her the balance amount which is calculated as Rs 1,860 as final and single settlement.

Taking all these into consideration the court is pleaded to dismiss the complaint with the court expenses of the accused.
Dated: 29 November 1984

Produced herewith is the copy of the promissory note the complainant made in connection with the said borrowing from the plaintiff's daughter.

Five Rupee Stamp Paper

This is the promissory note made by P K Rajappan, residing at Kayalvarathu, of Srayikkadu shore, of Perinadu at Karunagapally

Taluk to D Sudhamani residing at Edamannel, of Parayakadavu, at Kulasekharapuram area of the above said Taluk:

I promise hereby that the sum of Rupees Six Thousand One Hundred Sixty and Paise Thirty Five (Rs 6160 ps35) that I have borrowed from you on the date 8th of December, 1982 for the purpose of performing the wedding of my daughter will be repaid after the mentioned wedding. In the event of breaching of this promise I am willing to be made responsible and payable for the said sum along with an interest at the rate of 20 percent through a trial court by means of foreclosure actions upon myself and the properties I possess that is deemed appropriate by the court.

P K Rajappan
S/d
Date 8 February 1982
Witness No 1] K Ramadas S/d
Witness No 2] V Gangadharan S/d

CHAPTER 22

College Magazine Turns Irritable

The college magazines published from the Malabar Christian College in Kozhikode in the year 2000 and that of the Government Brennen College of Talassery published in the year 2001 chanced to have articles that vehemently criticized Mata Amritanandamayi. After these magazines had been out from their respective printing presses, those students who were the devotees of Mata Amritanandamayi and the students belonging to the subsidiary organisation of the left wing political party in the State of Kerala, Communist Party of India (Marxist), started fighting each other on the publication of these controversial articles on Mata. The students who supported her also went on strike and these colleges were closed down for a few days because of their agitations.

Translation of the controversial article written by the student named Sreelal P P of Malabar Christian College is given below.

'THE BACKGROUND OF GODS'

People consider those people godmen who divert the flow in both the cyber and on ground spaces. They are believed to have the

ability to create vibhuthi out of the thin air, as well, have connections with an entire spectrum of people in power starting from big corporations to underworld dons, and the prime minister's wife as a trophy item. They are considered Gods by thousands. They say that they talk with God in secret. And they speak for these gods even mightier than the real god, obviously.

The beautiful woman at Vallikavu in Kollam is the resort of the big guns of the business world. How did she become Mata Amritanandamayi? In a male dominated society like India, how did a woman rise to the supremacy in the corporate-like spiritual business?

Now society has identified the black sheep that worked relentlessly to stitch his/her spiritual cloak. The objective behind these wo/men-gods is to get us at the throat of one another by feeding the venomous sectarian ideology of communalism which hitherto lived in harmony despite belonging to diverse ethnic communities. Sudhamani showed up in our society declaring herself as the embodiment of a mother and a god, hiding herself in a draping of white cloth. For some she could be a mother, for some a god. But by what standard did the literate community in Kerala place this woman in an elevated position in spirituality? Is it thanks to the strength in numbers of her devotees that take advantage of the mute and meek public?

All man-gods keep a vault of drugs in the go-downs of their ashrams. The system of devadasi, (prostitutes for the god in temples, who are meant for the upper class and priests in the real world), is a different but subtle form of making young girls the servants of the gods at the temples, where they are eventually sexually ex-

ploited by the priest and the affluent class.

Nobody has seen the inmates of these ashrams and mutts return to the society they came from. The reason is once they are in the grip of these man-gods and their subordinates it is hard to escape from the spider web. These 'gods' are venomous spiders indeed. We may mistakenly think that it is the hundreds of thousands devotees that are the strength of Mata Amritanandamayi. On the contrary it is the hindutwa element that is the powering their engines of expansion. She is in the group of people who play the role of caste, Hindu fascism. The Hindu fascist factors in our country see people like her as the launch pads for their ideology. Even Kerala has its activists and cultural leaders experience her hugs. And they elevate her to the level of an embodiment of motherly love.

People do not understand the fact that she is just the puppet in the hands of Sangh Parivar and hindutva. She is made the avatar of love to be exploited for the smooth operations of the underworld.

All the godmen and godwomen today have a direct link to the underworld. They have used the money of the underworld for charity to whitewhash their dealings in the eye of public opinion. It is interesting that they have not used all the wealth of the underworld for the welfare of our communities, who are supposed to live a very humble life. They spend about 10 percent of it to build rosy images of themselves. These godmen are also a threat to the minority communities that live in this country.

Knowing for themselves there is neither such thing as a god, nor

his control or command, nor evil and virtue, nor an invisible power to control our lives, these godmen pretend to be gods. On this fertile soil the phenomenon of godmenhood thrives. These players do not just limit their playground to the supersized ground of spirituality. They invest millions in diverse business interests as well.

The youth of today are afraid and intimidated somehow to tear away the masks of these godmen and reveal them in the very bright light of logic and sensibility. Nevertheless, it is obviously the new generation that is capable of doing anything against these vicious men and women. When the idea of today fails the new generation may wage their war not with sword but with fire of ire. So the new generation is very much duty-bound to target these wrong-doers and pave way for the new world of equality.
(Re-published by Crime, a Malayalam investigative journal, in its October, 2000 edition)

SWAMI GNYANODAYANANDA'S SUPPORT TO THE STUDENT WRITER

Swami Gnyanodayananda— secretary at the Andanda Samajam, Kannur—had written an article as a reflex to Brennen College developments in the Malayalam daily Desabhimani of October 5, 2001.

He verbally attacked her saying that she was acting against the spirit of Hindu scripts like Bhagavat Gita and Vedas and Upanishads, as she was living a life against the teaching of the same.

She has now turned an idiot since she occupied the seat of god, leading people to hell. Here is the synopsis of what he had written.

ARTICLE BY SAMI GNYANODAYANANDA

A student pursuing graduation in Philosophy at Brennen College in Thalassery has written an essay titled 'The Background of Gods' which has sparked off some controversies. In that material the said Philosophy student has criticised some self-styled godmen in our society. At this point it would not be appropriate not to say something. Therefore, I chose to indicate some points.

Mata Amritanandamayi is a person who has risen in the vista of spiritualism in a fine morning. She has already reached success to the level whereby she has mutts in many countries and income sources in manifold ways. Nevertheless there is nothing to worry about in the heaped up wealth by and for her. She earned a followership of huge size that thinks money alone is god and money alone should be trusted. It is not my business to know about her income sources and her ashrams engagements; hence I am not touching those subjects. However, I strongly feel that she needs to correct her miss-deeds that are being done in the name of god. She keeps saying that she has never said that she is a god, and that she never asked anyone to worship her. But the truth is completely alien to this argument. She has placed herself above all godmen, probably god himself. 'Om Amriteswarai Namah' is the slogan that quite proves it. One can find this propaganda in every part of this land. It is the will of a person whether to worship another person or not to. But who permitted amma to affix Om, the pranav mantra and use the holy word as part of her name?

Is it Mata Amritanandamayi who created the universe? Or is it the almighty god? When she dies, won't this universe continue to exist?

Even if she dies, the spirit of life which is eternal will remain. To demonstrate the eternity of the universe our ancient sages who realized the meaning of Upanishads whispered the mantra of *Om Namah Sivaya,* the penta-syllable mantra.

But people do not understand this and they wrongly recite *Om Amriteswari Nama.* This amounts to asking for the burden of committing a horrible sin.

Mata Amritanandamayi has no special status. She may have realized spiritual wisdom, *atmagyana.* But she is living a delusion, the maya.

Under this hallucination she is placing idols claiming it to be the installation of *Brahma*. She also makes people worship such idols. She lets people, devotees wash her feet. Many people who had attained the knowledge of self —atmagyana—like her had fallen in the trap of *maya*, illusion.

People who have seen such material growth and clamour had been misled by the physical appearance. They became so because they never bothered to refer the holy scripts of Hinduism.

The progressive element of our community also is to blame, because of their unwillingness to intervene. So self-styled god-persons like Mata Amritanandamayi should have the mind to correct themselves, not people like Jithesh. I would not say that what

Jithesh wrote was completely correct.

The evil in Mata Amritanandamayi assuming the role of god is much a greater one compared to the one attracted by Jithesh. (The writer is the secretary of Ananda Smajam, Kannur. This opion is not that of the CPIM or the daily, *Deshabhimani*, it is solely the writer's view), we welcome response to this article from our readers.

Deshabhimani published a series of articles on the same subject as a regular column in the paper. So two remarkable pieces of reporting found under the concerned heading are given below—

The observation made by Swami Gnyanodayananda from the point of spiritualism of amma is noteworthy
(*Desabhimani*, October 5, 2000)

Even if the article by Swami is weighed down with unscientific and superstitious arguments, it clearly shows the dislike and disagreement for the mangods a sane mind should have. Therefore, the article prompts an open discussion on the subject.

Swami Gyanodayananda argues that the one and only fault of Mata Amritanandamayi is propagation of the slogan *Aum Amriteswaraya Namah* throughout this land. She has declared herself as god. She stretches out her legs to the devotees to get her feet washed by them. She praises herself as amma, mother and make those people older than herself call her amma. She has bulged into an institution. People of higher level in society wor-

ship her, call her amma and wash her feet. And they forget everything when they are hugged by her.

Water and fire became gods of primitive cavemen, thanks to their sense of insecurity and fear. These gods paved way for the organised religions. Godmen are the product of a middle class culture which encourages the formation of cults and political charismatism. It is not the spirits of illusion, but the people with imbalanced minds that allow these godmen and godwomen to exist. The oracle of Bhagavati temple becomes god only when he is possessed. But these godmen consider themselves gods whenever they are awake. Reasoning and reality of the world have no entry into their domains. Some of them even employ magic and eye washing tricks.

Mata Amritanandamayi is not known for performing any magic, according to our understanding of her. Spiritual hugging and singing and those chantings are said to be special about her. Now she owns immense wealth and countless institutions. The growth happened within a short span of time. A forth-standard schooled but semi-literate girl could celebrate her birthday thrilling the moment with an enormous boat race, which was way bigger than the Nehru Trophy Boat Race, a national event named after the first prime minister of the country. People see the top political leaders fall at her feet begging her blessings. When the chief minister of Kerala implores for her blessings and wishes for the safekeeping of the computer education in the State, it not only shows the ridiculous attitude of the people of the State that is recognized as the most literate State of the country, but also it strips off all the traces of our pride.

This article is the response to the article entitled Background of Gods written by the second year graduation student at Brennen College and describing the showdown of agitations by the student devotees of amma and others related to it. A teenage student writing his opinion in his college magazine is nothing unusual. The thought, analysis and emphasises in the article are only his and nobody else's. The reader can either agree or disagree with him. If Mata Amritanandamayi's devotees have the right to say that she is a god, the rest of us can have the same degree of right to say she is not. India is a country that allows freedom of expression.

The followers of Mata Amritanandamayi have never shown the patience or decency to put up with the article written by a mere college student. They found politics in it as well; along with many other oppressive things.

They took to the path of violent protests. Read the pamphlet they printed for wide distribution, published in the name of *Amrita Yuva Darma Sena*—Amrita Youth Religious Army. One should first get to know that seeking to see the face god, to gauge the light of the spirituality of Mata Amritanandamayi with elaborate and stable ideology is utter foolishness.

One cannot measure the multifaceted works of Mata Amritanandamayi Mutt with the scale of the dead-like ideals of Engels and Marx.

The little monkey of the lineage that have people who said that sexuality is as non-important as taking some tea, and if there was a woman, rape is likely to take place, cannot grasp the advice be-

stowed by amma on sexuality.

All social changes are not produced by political parties.
The hidden attackers continued like this in the pamphlet.

This is the kind of language employed by the devotees of amma in a pamphlet officially published by them. This pamphlet has also this— "Amma is never against the commitment to the service of the nation. The pamphlet said that this was advice spoken by amma herself." She surely has a dose of hatred towards Marxism. These pamphlet writers have undertaken the task of recruiting students for the RSS student wing outfit, ABVP.

This is indicative of the fact that Mata Amritanandamayi is indulging in proposing this ideology. This pamphlet lets us see her true colour. She may not be aware about the philosophically inclined movement of the mutt. She may be the tool in someone's hand.

If you take a count of godmen like Amritanandamayi, you can find hundreds of them who operate using the same methodology adopted by her. Many of them are unknown primarily because of the number of devotees has not been large enough, which makes it impossible for them to play big. They neither have ministers rushing to them for worshipping them. Mata Amritanandamayi has means, men and a given menu. Even if the case were so, is it righteous and ethical?

If the student who wrote an article against her can be labelled god-denier, can the devotees of Mata Amritanandamayi have the limitless right to say anything against anyone?

We have had people in the past who had declared themselves, "I am the state". She is just one among them. Let her run a mutt, let her run hospitals and colleges, let her build houses for the poor. All of them are good deeds. But she shouldn't be left free to threaten those who raise questions against her. That could be dangerous.

The tendency of *hindutwa* fascists to convert the admirers and fan-base of of Mata Amritanandamayi to a politically charged class is dangerous. It will destroy this country eventually.
Devotion and worship are the private matter of a person. This land has people who believe in monotheism and polytheism and those who dismiss all these and remain atheists. All of us have our own position, explanation, and justification for holding their views. Do not think that you can slap your own belief on anyone with force.

Appreciation of Mata Amritanandamayi should not be required to have the certification of approval from the head of Mata Amritanandamayi Mission or any of their establishments. Mata has to teach her devotees to have the sense to counter her critics with a balanced mind and sensible approaches.

The phrasing 'the merciful amma' by her own devotees alone is not enough. The word amma —mother— itself is the synonym for love and care and tolerance. That being the case, is it any virtue to correct a college student with threat and violence? Is it not shameful for a person of her stature?

Is the way of god to resist opposition by means of oppression and violence and threat of violence? And sending emails with abus-

ing? If this is just fine today, they will reach us tomorrow with trident and sword to kill us.

This incident has ten times the weight of what swami Gnyanodayananda mentioned. We need to have more discussions on this across our land and I think Brennen college episode is just a starting point for that.

(P Jayarajan, *Desabhimani* 2001, Oct 27). P Jayarajan is a prominent leader from Communist Party of India (Marxist)

IT IS EASIER TO BE GOD, DIFFICULT TO BE HUMAN

This letter is in response to the article about Mata Amritanandamayi. I feel that the solution lies with the problem creator herself. I spent both my childhood and teenage years near Vallikavu. So I have heard a lot about her from very many sources. Even I thought that I should have written something on her in a daily. I congratulate Gyanodayan for removing the mask of Mata Amritanandamayi by quoting lines from the Gita and Upanishads. This is a warning for those who wash the feet of godmen who exploit the pathetic condition of men and women in frustration and woes.

— Prof CPS Banerji, Kollam

CHAPTER 23

Protests of the Natives

Those people who lived in and around Vallikavu, which is home to the ashram of Mata Amritanandamayi had protested and resisted against the kind of spirituality she professed. In the early days, these protests and acts of resistance took place more often than not. Over the course of time, she could silence them with her increasing influence, thanks to her ever growing money and muscle power. Her association with extremist outfits like RSS paid off well too. Anyway, below given is a notice-matter that was printed as pamphlets and notices and copies of which were pasted on walls and elsewhere around Vallikavu and the vicinity of it. Today it is quite different, though. Most people who live around there are either meek followers or people scared of doing anything against the mutt.

THE VALLIKAVU REACTION FORUM

Sudhamani, age 34, is not the only one of those godwomen who has been forged from the counterfeit mint of blind faith and superstition. Those people who swear that she is the avatar of

Vishnu and Parasakthi are only cheating others, knowingly or otherwise.

In our perilous time of extremism by religious faith and communalism that is weighing our society down, those people who widen the spread of false propaganda on behalf and benefit of her are only doing anti-social deeds.

The elements in our masses that seek to see the seeds of unrest and communal clashes are behind the scene to direct and control our godmen and godwomen. Mata Amritanandamayi AKS Sudhamani is just one among them, who is just the one programmed by them. Just like Maharshi Mahesh Yogi, Swami Sadachari and Satyasai Baba who were known around the globe, she is about to attain their level of success in becoming a bogus name.

She is working hard in as many ways as she can to become one. She has taken hold of some bureaucrats to thrive at the cost of damaging the national interests. We have to probe her early life and family with the help of CBI, the top-notch agency capable for such investigations.

The miracle power she is said to have has yet to be proved. Those people who keep telling the public that she is the avatar of goddess Parasakshi and Lord Vishnu should be tried for breach of trust.

We challenge her hardcore fans to prove that she possesses powers to do miracles and she is the avatar of any god in front of an audience which has a selected group of scientists, medical professionals and intellectuals. Instead of giving medical care and

treatments for a girl that had shown the symptoms of a disturbed and imbalanced mind; and nurturing her into the right path giving proper education; and swearing that she has the power to perform miracles, taking her childish and morbid gestures to support the theory, these people with certain bunch of interests are taking advantage of her. It is time that the people of educated Kerala came out to resist it and publicly affirmed that this black marketing of spiritualism should stop.

Those people who indulge in praising and advertising, and those who engage in anti-social deeds and defaming the national pride, claiming themselves to be representatives of the whole nation should look for some other ways to making a living.

The history of Sudhamani's movement should be subject to the inquiry of the national investigation agency like CBI (Central Bureau of Investigation). And both the central and state governments should run an exploration into the international network they upkeep in the name of god.

—P Ravindran, P Pradeep Kumar, Vallikavu Prathikarana Vedi — Vallikavu Reaction Forum
(Ref: *Janayugom Malayalam Daily,* 10 Oct, 1988)

CHAPTER 24

The Strike at Amrita Institute of Technical Courses

In February of 1998, the employees of Mata Amritanandamayi Institute of Technical Courses, located in Puthiyakavu in Karunagapally went on strike to protest the anti-employee stands of the management of the same institute. The institute was taken over by the Mata Amritanandamayi Mutt in 1989. When the principal started to act as the representative of the Mata Amritanandamayi Mutt, the entire functioning of the institute took a nose dive. The employees had been working here for many more years found their rights and service rules being challenged. The institute over charged its students at the same time did not pay the teachers their due salaries. They took action against those employees who asked what was due. Those employees who protested first had been dismissed; and others were put under the pressure that their contracts could be terminated at any time.

The mata who has been touted as the embodiment of motherly love and compassion never intervened in a matter of grievance that took place right under her nose.

The employees at last formed an organisation for the cause of protesting against the mata. They organized a sit-in right in front of the institute for a week. The slogans they raised at the demonstration are shown below—

1 - Recall the employees who have been dismissed.
2 - Bring back the employees who have been put on suspension
3 - Stop the injustice and unlawful home searching for personal probing
4 - End the attitude of enmity of the principal for the employees
5 - Unify the wages of employees
6 - Make the current employees permanent staff members
7 - Release the salaries that are put on hold
8 - Ensure a permanent employment
9 - Enhance the facilities for learning for the students
10 - Apply the gratuity by the norms set by the government
11 - The principal should uphold the right to justice for the employees

This organisation of employees of the institute published this notice, which was printed at K V Press Karunagapally on 22 January 1998. This speaks a lot of the anti-employee stand of the mutt and the mata there.

CHAPTER 25

Mistaken Notions

Sometimes it is funny that some incidents and situations that are ridiculous and they have been witnessed by huge crowds, or a TV live show. When a crucial issue of women's right of entry at Sabarimala Temple came to fore, she infamously said that the fish used to living in the aquarium are different from those in the sea. The social media celebrated this dumb statement for weeks on end. The social media criticised her stand against women, being herself a women. She also became a laughing stock in a huge gathering by raising the slogan "Swami Ayyappan ki jai" as this was very strange for one worshiping or praising a god in Hinduism. Her sloganeering rather resembled a political slogan. This time too the social media went hilarious about this blunder. These statements and blunders reveal her level of semi-literacy. Let us examine some of them; for the sake of brevity, let us limit the numbers.

HINDU AND HINDUISM

If you take the customs of any country you can find a Hindu tradition there. At the beginning, there was only Indian culture. It was not confined to India itself (Mata Amritanandamayi Speeches, Pg 27)

This statement is not true. Hinduism is not something that came

from India, on the contrary it came to India from outside. Hinduism is nothing but the ideology of the Aryan Zoroastrianism, according to most historians.

They were from the European heartland such as Hungary, Austria, Bohemia and up to the Netherlands and France and Ural mountain ranges. The Aryans ventured through Iran and crossed Punjab and settled in the Indus valley. Those people who settled in Punjab started Vedic culture. Their beliefs and traditions in the course of time transformed into the so-called Hinduism. In fact there is no such thing as a Hindu religion. Even the word Hindu came from the foreigners. The word Hindu has never been mentioned in any *puranas* or scripts. Contrary to this, this specific word can be found in the Old Persian language.

The people of western Asia and middle Asia had used this word a few hundred years ago. Hindu is a name used to identify the people who lived on the other side on river Indus. The name Indus changed to Hindu, in Persian. Sound 's' changed to sound 'h' in Persian as a rule. So this transforming of sound is quite natural in the case of Hindu.

The word used to specify religion in India in olden days was Sanatana Dharma - The Land of River Sindhu was converging point of different thoughts and philosophies.

There lived theists as well as atheists. Spiritualism and materialism flourished together. One could also find those who followed the schools of *Lokayata, Sankhya, Vaisheshika, Nyaya* all belonging to materialist philosophies in a strict sense.
Buddhism and Jainism was just the continuation of it.

So the name Hindu was not connected to any religion in the beginning, but a landmass or territory. That said, the best way to explain the Vedic or Brahminical tradition or religion is in terms of Hinduism and nothing else will do.

MATA'S HINDU EXTREMISM

Once she said— Children, look at the mosques and churches of Muslims and Christians. There they have only religion and spiritual concerns in these places. They don't allow drama or dancing to take a place there. But if you look at Hindu temples you can find dirty dramas and films and dances which involve spending thousands of rupees. Is there anything worse to spoil our culture? Should we look for any other reason for the Hindu not being awaken? Children, you should go to church on Sundays, there they adhere to this principle. They read the bible regularly. However, Hindus don't know even the meaning of the word Hindu. They don't know a single line from Bhagavat Gita. We have lots of engineers and professors who don't know a single line from our holy scripts. The Muslim community teaches their young ones their religion at a very early age along with Arabic. So they have the customs and manners. Then, how about Hindus?

Christians teach their children to become priests. Do we teach our youngsters to become sanyasis?
(Mata Speeches, Pg 701)

These quotes show how religiously biased she is. She just expresses her intolerance and fear of other faiths. This also betrays her

religious radicalism.

DID SHE FORETELL THE ASSASSINATION OF MS INDIRA GANDHI?

On the dates of 31 October and 12 November in 1984 her devotees arranged a reception for her at one of her mutts— at Mulankadakam, in Kollam. On 30 October, some devotees went to the ashram to invite her to the programme. But Mata Amritanandamayi was not willing to talk to the devotees. She mentioned that she wasn't interested in joining the programme. She told them to call it off altogether. However, she reluctantly accompanied them to take part in the programme thanks to the devotees insisting that all arrangements had already been made.

No sooner had she reached Mulankadakam, the clock said 11.00, than a devotee came running saying, "Amma! It is reported that Indira Gandhi is shot!" Then amma said aloud, so that people nearby could hear her, "Gayatri, Indira Gandhi is no more."
(Mata's Speeches, Pg 955)

In the book, it is claimed that the Mata knew about the death of Mrs Gandhi long before the world came to know about it. It was the reason she had been reluctant to go to Mulankadakam.
Her critics asked that if she had the divine power to know beforehand the death of Mrs Gandhi, why she did not inform the authorities and save the precious life of our Prime Minister.

CHAPTER 26

Swami Sandeepanandagiri Opposing Mata

During the past decade Swami Sandeepanandagiri's progressive outlook on Hinduism and staunch criticism of the Sangh Parivar's ideology has earned him insults, threats, a disparaging nickname and even a physical attack. He also criticised self-styled godmen and women like Amma for their retrogressive stands on several issues. Some unidentified men attacked his residence and the vehicles there were set on fire on 28 October 2018. Later he explained to the press how his nuanced explanations of the Gita, focusing on what he saw as the "inner meaning" of its text, had earned him the wrath of traditionalists, "The religious fundamentalists see the *Bhagavad Gita* from the perspective of a war and its travails and trauma. But I see it differently." He also said, "To me, it symbolises the battlefield inside each of us. The 101 Kauravas represent that number of negative thoughts in each of us. The Pandavas represent goodness. So I always saw it as the victory of good over evil, from an entirely spiritual point of view."

He was sharing his understanding of the Gita from his guru Swami Chinmayananda, whose Chinmaya Mission he had joined. But

in those days of the 1990s, the Sangh Parivar had little influence in Kerala.

Eventually, Sandeepananda started his own spiritual discourses in 2006, and the attacks started to take place.
"The Sangh Parivar perhaps found it difficult to attack me when I was still part of an institution like the Chinmaya Mission. But once I left to be on my own, they pointed their guns at me," he said.

"They just couldn't digest my way of looking at the scriptures and descended to the level of issuing threats and warnings to me to change my ways."

There were other points of conflict too: whereas the Sangh champions Hindu godmen and godwomen, like Mata Amritanandamayi, Sandeepananda has always spoken out against the commercialisation of religion and spirituality.
In 2012, he wrote a few articles for a popular Malayalam daily in which he described the Mahabharat as a mere story, inviting the wrath of the Parivar.

He recalled his meeting with a senior leader of RSS think tank Bharatiya Vichara Kendra—Indian Centre of Thoughts—in Thiruvananthapuram. "He warned me against explaining the scriptures the way I do, saying I could perhaps do so before individuals but not before large groups," the monk said.

When his residence was destroyed in part, and the vehicles set on fire, on account of his standing on Hinduism, he said —
"It isn't certain whether the arson was provoked by my support for

the state government decision to implement the apex court order on Sabarimala, but I have faced physical attacks from Parivar activists in the past —such as at a public event in 2014".

“Four RSS workers were eventually arrested. But I left it to the police to deal with such violations of law,” he said.

It is believed that the assault happened after Sandeepananda was seen as “insulting” Mata Amritanandamayi. “I had spoken about how the puja rooms of modern Malayalis have more pictures of contemporary human-gods than the old spiritual beings. They— the Sangh Parivar— interpreted it as an attack on Mata Amritanandamayi,” he said.

Soon after, the monk addressed a debate organised by CPM youth wing DYFI where he spoke about fascist elements using religious passion to instigate violence.

More recently, he had questioned the popular notion of Lord Ayyappa being a naishtika brahmachari—permanent celibate— the reason cited for the traditional ban on women of childbearing age entering the Sabarimala shrine. This view was against the one the amma held, she proclaimed at a big crowd organised in protest of the Kerala government stand that women should be allowed to the temple, ignoring whether they are menstruating or not.

Sandeepananda had told a Malayalam channel that there was no scriptural evidence about the deity’s celibacy. He had also questioned the rights that the erstwhile royal family of Pandalam and the Thazhamon family of tantris, priests, claim over the Sabarimala temple.

Ironically, some years ago she told a TV channel reporter that all women should be allowed to temples of all kinds, because she saw men and women equal. She also added that being herself women, she could not take such a viewpoint that made women lesser humans. The sudden change in thought might have arisen thanks to the anti-woman mentality shared by the public when the Sabarimala issue surfaced.

CHAPTER 27

Damaging the Fragile Mother Nature, Repeatedly

Hollywood actor Sharon Stone once called her a remarkable angel while presenting her with an award for her humanitarian work. Devotees at her ashram sing her praises, pointing to her transformation from the daughter of a fisherman into a supposed miracle worker who can, by her own account, turn water into milk and cure a leper by licking his wounds. In stark contrast, her ashram stands as a much-criticised symbol of rampant illegal construction. Officials at the Alappad grama panchayath, under which Amritapuri falls, say the ashram has repeatedly violated Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) rules. These rules define a Coastal Regulation Zone as an area up to 500 metres from the high-tide line. There are restrictions on certain human and industrial activity, including large constructions, in such a zone. The objective is to protect the sensitive spots that are ecologically fragile, home to many forms of life, and increasingly threatened by climate change and unscrupulous exploitation by people.

The ashram portrays itself as environmentally conscious and exhorts its followers to be judicious about the use of natural

resources. "In the past, nature was like Kamadhenu, a wish-fulfilling cow. Today, that cow has become sick and old and is stumbling towards death. We alone are responsible for this. Our indiscriminate exploitation of nature can be likened to cutting off the tree branch on which we are sitting," Amritanandamayi was quoted as saying in a post on the official website of her ashram, www. amritapuri.org

"Amma and her mutt are very vocal about environmental issues. But in our highly vulnerable panchayat, the mutt is the biggest threat to environment. They violate and surpass all rules and consider Amritapuri a free Republic," said panchayath president and Communist Party of India (Marxist) activist P Saleena. "We are for a David versus Goliath fight. We hope we win."

RAMPANT VIOLATIONS

In Alappad, the panchayath office has identified 508 violations of CRZ, involving encroachments and illegal constructions, its secretary T Dileep shared his feeling. Among these, "there are 83 large-scale constructions in violation of all laws. All those 83 illegal buildings are constructed by Amritanandamayi's trust", he said.

According to the secretary, in April 2005, the ashram submitted building plans for only 10 of the 83 buildings, but the plans had no approval. For those 10 buildings, the panchayath gave the ashram numbers in the "unauthorised buildings" category. This means that the ashram can continue to occupy and use these buildings pending a final decision. The remaining buildings have no numbers.

As per official records, the illegal constructions are concentrated in ward VII at Parayakadavu of the panchayath. Listed at number 489 on the CRZ violations list is Mata Bhavan, where Amritanandamayi lives.

Alappad panchayath is a narrow 16-km-long land strip wedged between the canal and the Arabian Sea. It has a maximum width of 500 metres, shrunk in some places to just 33 meters. So, naturally, all of Alappad comes under the CRZ regulations.
But, as panchayath Secretary pointed out, "The buildings are located close to the high-tide line and one among them is 14 storeys high. The distance from the sea at some points is hardly one metre."

Apart from building plans, the ashram has also failed to furnish land ownership documents, the panchayath secretary revealed. Some employees at the panchayath office accused the ashram of corrupting land-buying rules. They said the ashram had approached small landholders occupying public land for generations without proper papers, negotiated with them directly and taken over the land. But due to the lack of documentation, the ashram could not register these lands.

Furthermore, the secretary said the ashram did not pay the panchayath any tax. "As the buildings have no numbers and no land documents to prove ownership, the panchayath is not able to collect taxes from the ashram," he said. "The ashram owes the panchayath taxes worth millions. If they had paid the amount, the panchayath might have achieved high living standards and huge infrastructure."

Amritanandamayi's empire extends beyond Amritapuri and Vallikavu to the Adinad, Kulasekharapuram and Karunagapally regions of Kollam district. According to a survey conducted by the Karunagapally Taluk Land Board in August 2019, the ashram is in possession of 402 acres of surplus land. Of this, 204.5 acres is in Alappad panchayath, as per the land board's proceedings (title number: SM1/17/KNPY).

According to the Kerala Land Reforms Act, a person or organisation can possess up to 15 acres of land only. Any land above this limit is surplus and thus illegal which will be added to the state land bank.

In addition, the land board documents show Amritanandamayi's sister, Kasthuri Bai possesses 27 acres of surplus land. Kasthuri Bai, a homemaker, lives with her family in the ashram complex.

DOCUMENTS LOST IN THE TSUNAMI?

Amritanandamayi's ashram is not only guilty of illegal construction of large-sized buildings in an ecologically sensitive coastal zone but also of ignoring repetitive notices from the panchayath office, its members say.

"The mutt ignores our notices and shows no concerns to the environmental and survival issues of the local community," says Cibi Bony, a panchayath member and Revolutionary Marxist Party leader.

On May 9, 2017, the ashram was slapped with a demolition notice (number A4.447/16) under the Kerala Panchayath Raj Act for

CRZ violations. This was the first such notice to be issued to the mutt, which reportedly did not respond to it.

On July 5, 2018, panchayath secretary Dileep issued a notice to the mutt, in quest of building plans and ownership details of the structures in Amritapuri and its surroundings. In a letter to the panchayath office on August 8 that year, the ashram's secretary apologised for the delay in furnishing details and sought more time. However, there was no further written communication from the ashram, according to the panchayath officials.

"Despite our repeated notices, mutt authorities were unable to produce land records and building plans to prove the constructions legal," said Dileep. "They gave an oral explanation that the land records were lost in the tsunami that hit in 2004. The mutt sustained very little damage in the tsunami and did not utilise earlier government drives to re-issue documents lost in the tsunami."

The mutt ignored notices to appear before the Karunagapally Taluk Land Board as well, said Abdul Salam, a member of the board and a former Alappad village official. However, following a 2017 Kerala High Court order, the ashram paid the Clappana panchayath Rs 1 crore in compensation and got unauthorised constructions spread across 45 acres in that panchayath regularised. According to local newspaper reports, the court order was in response to a complaint filed by a CPI(M) worker.

DISCRIMINATED FISHING COMMUNITY

It is not only panchayath officials who have grievances against the ashram. The local fishing community has the same grievances.

Beyond Amritanandamayi's empire of high-rise buildings, the rest of Parayakadavu village is flat. Fishing families here live in tiny thatched sheds as the CRZ rules prohibit any permanent constructions.

According to panchayath member Bony, this has made the fisher folk resentful of the rules as they feel discriminated against, especially when they see the "ashram with huge financial power and influence violating the same rules by constructing huge buildings".

At the same time, the environmental hazards that the CRZ rules seek to keep at bay have already affected their lives drastically. Indiscriminate mining of mineral sand has resulted in massive sea erosion, forcing a large number of traditional fishermen to relocate to other places in search of new jobs. It is notable that the sea had swallowed 20,000 acres of land in Alappad alone during the past 20 years.

According to some reports, the erosion began with the tsunami in the year 2004. That disaster was central to the rise in Amritanandamayi's popularity. "The tsunami wreaked havoc in Alappad and the ashram volunteered the rescue and rehabilitation efforts. Furthermore, it offered Rs 100 crore worth of relief in all tsunami-hit regions of India," recalled R. Baby, a Congress leader and panchayath member. It is mentionable that India's first and foremost corporate group, the Tata could donate only one crore to the tsunami relief fund of the government.

It was also in the wake of the tsunami that the *Amrita Sethu* was built. "The ashram built the bridge as an emergency facility for

residents of Alappad, saying it can evacuate 15,000 people in 30 minutes in any emergency," said Baby. "Technically, it is still an emergency evacuation facility. But practically, it has evolved into a mere entry-restricted bridge connecting the spiritual empires of the ashram." No local has the audacity to question it.

If the ashram continues with its building spree, critics fear more environmental disasters to follow in.

SUPREME COURT IS THE LAST RESORT

The Alappad panchayath and the fishing community are now hoping the Supreme Court will intervene in the matter as of writing these passages.

Alappad panchayath official said that Kerala chief secretary Tom Jose had submitted in January 2020 a detailed report to the court recommending that 76 buildings erected by the mutt be demolished under CRZ rules.

The report was submitted following a Supreme Court order in September 2019 to raze hundreds of luxury flats in Maradu, a locality in Kochi city, for CRZ violations at the same time, in 2020. "If the Supreme Court-monitored demolition in Maradu is any yardstick, these buildings in Alappad panchayath must be razed," the panchayath official pointed out. "We have issued demolition notices on multiple occasions. But the ashram people ignored them all. Now we are planning legal action, including approaching the Supreme Court."

Former village official Salam said the villagers too were hopeful

that the Supreme Court would step in, given that it had not only ensured the Maradu flats were torn down but had also ordered the demolition of the Kapico Resorts on the banks of the Vembanad lake in Alappuzha for CRZ violations. The court pronounced this order in January.

"The same sort of violations have occurred in the ashram and the law must not be discriminatory," said Salam. "We have all the documents to prove our point."

CHAPTER 28

Labour Department Raids Amrita Hospital

Amrita Institute of Medical Sciences—AIMS—, a leading hospital in the country was seen in a war of words with the labour department, after the labour department performed a surprise inspection at the hospital. While the labour department found various discrepancies related to minimum wage and leaves, asking the hospital to rectify the discrepancies, the hospital said that the department exceeded their jurisdiction, not informing the hospital authorities about the inspection and then by threatening to inform and call the print and visual media. The Labour department officials conducted surprise inspection at Amrita Institute of Medical Sciences on 16 June 2017 and found severe violations of labour laws at the corporate styled hospital. The inspection happened after the department received complaints that the hospital was not paying minimum wages to its *Amrita Seva Kendra* (ASK) workers who work at the posts of cleaners, attendants and patient aids.

It was also alleged that that their remuneration ranged between Rs 5,000 and Rs 8000, whereas, in accordance with the government norms, the minimum wages that should be paid range from

Rs 10,000 to Rs 12,000.

The Labour department officials during the inspection met around 300 staff members in all the departments and concluded that many employees were not getting minimum wages and overtime wages apart from the Amrita Sava Kendra workers. Other deficiencies pointed out by the department included, illegally retaining the certificates of pharmacy staffers and not giving them lawful leaves. The department also issued a stop work memo after noting that there was not enough safety measures undertaken at the under construction hostel building including fire safety equipping. The department then gave the hospital 2 weeks' notice for it to rectify the discrepancies, failing which action be followed.

Around 1,000 nurses of the institute and hundreds from other hospitals joined the strike demanding a solution for their problems, an AIMS staff-cum-member of the United Nurses Organisation said on 8 December 2011.

"Around 300 nurses are working as we did not want to disrupt the functioning of the hospital," the agitating organisation's leader said. The district labour officer mediated the talks in which the management, representatives of the nurses' union, P Rajeev, a Member of Parliament and Hibi Eden, a Legislative Member, participated. Justice V R Krishna Iyer, P Rajeev, Hibi Eden, councillor M P Mahesh, Chandran Pillai and M C Josephine addressed the nurses and spoke to the management earlier in the day. The nurses' union has raised its demands, which includes minimum wages as per government norm, and reasonable insurance cover.

The hospital authorities denied that functioning of departments was hit by the strike.

But the mediating talks ended in a stalemate as both the management and the nurses' union could not agree to each other's demand. When the hospital authorities said that they could not relent to any of the demands, the organisation has made it clear that they would go ahead with the strike until their demands are met.

Eventually the Goliath institute came to terms with the agitating nurses thanks to the amount of pressing it had from the public and the government.

CHAPTER 29

Local Government's Failed Attempt to Prosecute Mata Critic

Eminent and fairly popular author and activist from Kerala for freethought and rationalism, Sreeni Pattathanam, wrote a book that was a deep study on Mata and her so-called miraculous powers. Generally speaking it was the first and most remarkable book on Mata, which still offers a deep insight into the dark side of her world. The title of the book was *Mata Amritanandamayi: Divyakathakalum Yatharthyavum* —Mata Amritanandamayi: Divine Stories and Realities.

WHO IS SREENI PATTATHANAM

Sreeni Pattathanam had worked as a police officer before he chose a teaching career with the government schools in Kerala. He was the key person in challenging many questionable and faith-based practises in Kerala. He once challenged the government of Kerala for supporting the hoax worship at Sabarimala Temple whereby they lit a huge fire in a secret place in the mountains at Sabarimala at the peak of its pilgrimage season, to make the devotees believe that it was a divine radiance, *makarajoti*, that showed up

in the sky just above Sabarimala Ayyappa temple. People come in large numbers at this time to see the 'fireworks' taking them for some divine light that appeared up in the sky. The revenue made during this season was so huge, because the devotees throw away their money lavishly as donations at the temple, on seeing this 'miracle'.

This miracle light had a history which was connected with certain tribes that lived in and around the Sabarimala mountain range. They worshipped a deity of their own; part of the worshipping included lighting up a fire in the mountains. The day of the year that they do this happened to be a coincident with the pilgrimage time at the Ayyappa Temple. During the course of time the Ayyappa devotees took if for a miraculous power of lord Ayyappa. Ayyappa temple shot to fame and glory year after year thanks to this 'tribal phenomenon'. The revenue inflated. The government too was happy about the financial gain that brought in. The major temples and their incomes were, and are, in the control of the local State government.

Owing to an electricity generation project – hydel project – implemented at the site the tribes were evacuated from their homeland as a safety issue. In the year that followed, the Ayyappa devotees could not sight the divine light, as you can guess the hands that worked behind it had been removed from the place. This disappointed vey many Ayyappa devotees, the year that followed witnessed fewer devotees and much loss in revenue. This was a serious concern for the then government.

The people in the government planned accordingly and the department of police and that of the power project joined their

hands to create the 'show of light' very secretly in the mountain range. This place was really hard to access by anyone. Next year the officials of both departments heaped up camphor cubes in a place at the mountain and lit the heap at the same 'holy season'. Once the flame was viewed by the devotees the officials extinguished the fire by placing a wet canvass on it. They removed the canvass after a while and did the same thing for two more times. The devotees could not have anything more interesting and soul-satisfying than this. They could witness the holy light in the sky thrice as it had been usual at the temple in the far away and lonely forest. The flow of revenue started to pick up momentum once gain.

As we noted, the site where the 'holy operation' took place was kept a secret by the concerned officials. Anyone who tried to visit it would be killed by the officials themselves, if he could ever make his journey successfully to this place.

So Sreeni Pattathanam after receiving some tips from his previous colleagues in the police department gathered information about this government sponsored superstition and published several article about this. Some people even dared visit the place and get first hand information, but the police security was too tight to break into the mountain spot, risking the lives of those who attempted it.

Eventually he approached the High Court of Kerala and won his case, the jury asked the government of Kerala to publicly take a stand that *Makarajyoti* at Sabarimala was man-made and not divine.

Pattathanam also campaigned and worked for exposing several faith practices based on ignorance and superstition in Kerala with his organisation *Bharatheeya Yukthivadi Sangham* (Rationalist Association of India). He was the first to publish a book on mata. He published the book in January, 2002 with the title *Mata Amritanandamayi – Divine Stories and Realities* in Malayalam. Once it came to light an inmate at the ashram, Ajan made a complaint with the then Chief Minister of Kerala, A K Antony, who initiated action against the author. And it was something at the extreme point of it—prosecution. Progressive thinking organizations and people cried foul over this move and they started campaigning to save the author. The campaigning culminated successfully, even international media and organizations took a strong stand against the government's move.

Below is the full text of articled published by the organisation Humanist International based in UK. Humanists International is the trading name of the International Humanist and Ethical Union (IHEU), a not-for-profit organization registered in New York, USA (501(c)3) and operating as a foreign company in the United Kingdom (FC020642). IHEU is an organisation recognized by UN as well. This was published on 1 April 2003.

INDIAN RATIONALIST LEADER SREENI PATTATHANAM NEEDS SUPPORT!

Kerala Government renews attempts to prosecute author for book with explosive details on religious leader Mata Amritanandamayi, the "Hugging Mother"

HUGGING MOTHER

Mata Amritanandamayi of Kerala is known to the world as the

'hugging mother'. She was also the subject of a television documentary in the 'Weird Weekends' series on BBC TV, presented by Louis Theroux. She hugs people and passes on to them 'energy'. Reputedly she has hugged and healed some 20 million people all over the world as part of her mission. On Fridays she acts as the goddess Kali, and on many occasions she has claimed to be Lord Krishna himself.

Like god man Satya Sai Baba, she too has many devotees: BJP leaders like Prime Minister of India A.B. Vajpayee, Home Minister of India L.K. Advani, and also Congress Party Chief Minister (of Kerala) A.K. Antony are amongst them. Home Ministry records of the Government of India show that the Mata Amritanadamayi Mission is the second largest recipient in India of foreign funds – in 1998-99 alone Rs. 51.55 crores were received (about 515 million Indian Rupees or about 11.5 million US Dollars). Educational institutions established by this primary school drop out enjoy Deemed University status; Penguin India published her authorized biography ('Amma, A Living Saint' by Judith Cornell) where her miracles and her boundless love are highlighted, and the train Amrita Express (Palghat Town- Thiruvananthapuram) is named after her.

SACRED STORIES AND REALITIES

In 2002, rationalist leader Mr Sreeni Pattathanam, General Secretary of Bharateeya Rationalist Association – the Kerala State affiliate of the Rationalist Association of India, a member of IHEU – and Editor of the Malayalam language rationalist monthly *Yukthirajyam,* published a 170 page book in Malayalam: '*Matha*

Amruthandamayi – Divya Kadhakalum Yatharthiavum' (Matha Amrithanandamayi: Sacred Stories and Realities, Mass Publications, revised edition).

Mr Pattathanam's efforts to bring to light facts are pioneering, and his main contentions are that the Mata's claims to miracles are bogus, and that there have been many suspicious deaths in and around her ashram which need police investigation. The research work contains elaborate references to court records, news paper reports and quotations from well known literary figures, including statements from the Mata's close relatives, as well as an interview with Mata Amritanandamayi herself.

In 2002, members of the Bharathiya Rationalist Association staged a protest demonstration outside the Government secretariat in Thiruvananthapuram calling for an impartial inquiry into the allegations of suspicious deaths as well as the activities of the so-called charitable institutions being run by the influential 'god woman'.

GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC RESPONSE

Instead of investigating the allegations and examining the evidence produced, the state government – headed by the Mata's ardent devotee the Chief minister A K Antony – initiated moves to prosecute Mr Pattathanam for making 'objectionable references' to the spiritual leader, and for 'hurting the religious sentiments of her devotees'. With great alacrity, the state government moved swiftly, and statements from Sreeni Pattathanam as well as the publisher and printer were recorded by the police inspector of Karunagappally. The relevant law sought to be applied would be

Section 295-A which criminalizes 'insulting or attempting to insult the religion or religious beliefs of any class of citizens with an intention of outraging its religious feelings'.

Rising to the occasion, a group of writers and social activists headed by eminent Malayalee author Paul Zacharia and Human Rights activist Mr Mukundan C Menon issued a statement condemning the vindictive nature of the government's moves. "Since certain ruling politicians, both at the federal and state governments, are known devotees of the Mata, we have reasons to suspect that there is a sinister and malicious conspiracy behind the move to prosecute Mr Sreeni Pattathanam".

Because of the ensuing international attention, the government relented and halted its steps to facilitate the prosecution of the author. However, a relentless internet-based campaign was launched by the Mata's devotees against those who came to Sreeni Pattathanam's defence.

Mr PATTATHANAM'S STATEMENT

Both Mr Pattathanam as well as Mr C I Oommen, President of the Bharateeya Rationalist Association, Kerala, met with IHEU leaders in January 2003.

In a videotaped interview with IHEU Executive Director Babu Gogineni they told about their fears that in view of the prevailing campaign against rationalists, and the rise of Hindu fundamentalism, the danger for them was still not over, and that efforts to prosecute would be restarted. Mr Pattathanam could be arrested

and even tortured. "Custodial deaths are not uncommon in Kerala", they reminded us.

Mr Pattathanam emphasized elsewhere: "I believe that I worked in accordance with the Indian Constitution, they are trying to deny me my constitutional rights. This inhuman and cruel move against a writer by Hindu Fascists should be stopped". He told a newspaper "If the charges contained in my book are baseless, the devotees could have published a rejoinder. They have published malicious reports against rationalists in their publications".

URGENT MESSAGE

IHEU has now received urgent messages from Mr Pattathanam that on the pretext of executing a High Court judgement, the State Government has reopened the issue and the State Home secretary has summoned Mr Pattathanam to present himself before him on 18 March 2003 for questioning.

IHEU'S CALL FOR ACTION

IHEU notes that Mr Pattathanam was instrumental several years ago in exposing the 'miracle' of the divine *makarajyoti* light, which 'appears' during the annual Ayyappa pilgrimage in Kerala on a remote hill.

Leaders of the Bharateeya Rationalist Association have also performed immense public service to the people of India by stopping – through the means of a Public Interest Litigation in the Kerala High Court – the fraudulent claims of Mr Majeed of Fair

Pharma who earned millions of Rupees by claiming that his (unverified and unapproved) AIDS cure IMMUNO QR had saved 100,000 patients.

IHEU calls upon the Kerala state government to stop immediately the harassment of a respected rationalist who is performing public service by protecting the gullible and innocent through his investigations.

IHEU supports Mr Pattathanam's efforts to expose the truth behind claims to miracles.

IHEU defends Mr Pattathanam's freedom of expression and his rights as an author and applauds his courage in bringing to light important facts about suspected crimes.

IHEU calls upon the Kerala State government to uphold the principles of secularism and Humanism incorporated in Article 51 A (h) of the Indian Constitution which enjoins every Indian citizen to develop scientific temper and humanism.

IHEU also calls upon its member organizations, associates, human rights activists and defenders of democratic principles to send letters of protest to the Chief Minister of Kerala as well as the Home Secretary of Kerala state. Please copy your letters of protest to us via email. IHEU is bringing the urgent matter to the attention also of Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Reporters Sans Frontieres, The International Committee for the Protection of Journalists and the UN Special Rapporteur of Freedom of Religion or Belief.

RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION OF INDIA AND IHEU

The Rationalist Association of India is a full member of the International Humanist and Ethical Union (www.iheu.org).

MODEL LETTER

Mr. A.K. Anthony
The Chief Minister of Kerala State
Government Secretariat, Thiruvananthapuram 695 001
Kerala, India

Dear Chief Minister Anthony,

I am writing to protest the harassment Rationalist leader Mr. Sreeni Pattathanam is being subjected to in your state, because of his book *Mata Amruthandamayi – Divya Kadhakalum Yatharthiavum* (Mata Amrithanandamayi: Sacred Stories and Realities, Mass Publications, revised edition) exposing the alleged wrong doings of Mata Amritanandamayi.

I am aware of your own personal devotion to Mata Amrithanandamayi; however, I am alarmed that as Chief Minister as well as home minister in-charge of police and security, instead of examining the evidence produced in the book and launching an inquiry into the Aaashram activities, you have chosen to initiate moves to prosecute Mr Sreeni Patthathanam on the grounds that his book has hurt the religious sentiments of people, following a complaint by one Mr Ajan. The Mata's organisation is registered as a social organisation and not as a religious organisation. How can criticism of a social organisation and the doings of those as-

sociated with it cause hurt to religious sentiments? In any case, religious leaders cannot be immune from the attentions of the criminal justice system.

I call on you to uphold the principles of secular democracy, to uphold the rule of law, and to protect Mr Pattathanam's freedom of expression and belief and its lawful exercise.

In these troubles times in India where intolerance is on the rise, the international community is watching you and looking to you to uphold democratic principles

Yours sincerely,

———————

Please send similar letters to:
1). Chief Minister of Kerala: Fax: 91-0471-2333489
cmkerala@vsnl.net and chiefminister@kerala.gov.in
2). Governor of Kerala: Fax + 91 -471-2720266
3). Director General of Police, Kerala: Fax: + 91 – 471 – 2726560
Email: dgp@scrb.com
4). Principal Secretary Home (Police) Fax: + 91 – 471 – 2327582
Email: prisecy@home.kerala.gov.in
www.iheu.org

END

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